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ABSTRACT

The Entertainment Studies section of the proceedings contains the following 6 selected papers: "Mass Media Use and Teen Sexuality: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health" (Myra Gregory Knight); "Focus Group Analysis: Can It Help Explain Present Audience Discontent with Broadcast Network Television?" (William J. Adams); "Fall Colors 2000: The State of Diversity in Broadcast Network Prime Time Television" (Katharine E. Heintz-Knowles and Jennifer Henderson); "Wong Kar-Wai: An International Auteur in Hong Kong Film-Making" (Timothy R. Gleason, Qi Tang, and Jean Giovanetti); "The Influence of Media Ownership on News Coverage: A Case of CNN's Coverage of Movies" (Jaemin Jung); and "That Which Unites and Divides Us: A Study of Television Audience Meaning-Making" (Karen E. Kline). (RS)

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CS 510 723

MASS MEDIA USE AND TEEN SEXUALITY: FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

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Abstract

This study examined the cultivation of sexual attitudes and behaviors among adolescents based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a representative sample of U.S. high school students. The study found that television viewing alone was not linked with any of the sexual attitudes tested but that sexually suggestive media use and overall media use were. Both television viewing and sexually suggestive media use were associated with an increased risk of sexual debut.

Mass Media Use and Teen Sexuality: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

Does mass media use among adolescents contribute to their attitudes about sexuality and their sexual behaviors? Since the earliest days of moving pictures, many parents and educators have worried that it does. That worry, however, is based more on assumption than science. Few correlational studies have examined relationships between general media use and sexual attitudes or behaviors. Among those, findings have been inconsistent. In addition, most of the studies were based on small samples from a limited geographic area collected in the 1980s or before. It is not clear that the findings would extend to a larger, more diverse population in a substantially different media environment.

Unlike teens of previous generations, today's adolescents are exposed to a variety of potentially influential media. Most U.S. teens watch television, listen to music and read publications tailored to their specific age group. Teens from more privileged circumstances also may have access to commercial films, cable television, rental videos, video games, and the Internet. Studies tracking film and television content over several years have indicated that films and television shows of the 1990s contained an even greater propoprtion of sexually suggestive content than those of previous decades. This increase in sexually suggestive content has coincided with an increase in teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Between 1960 and 1992, the birth rate among unmarried teens rose from 15 per 1,000 15- to 19-year-olds to about 45 per 1,000 (Bachrach, Newcomer, Mosher & Ventura, 1997). By 1998, teens accounted for 2.5 million new sexually transmitted disease infections each year (Krowchuk, 1998).

Cultivation theory would point to television as a major source of such adverse effects. Developed in response to the civil unrest of the 1960s, the technique was used throughout the late 1960s and the early 1970s to demonstrate linkages between television viewing and conceptions or actions related to violence. George Gerbner, the technique's developer, attributed such relationships to television's unique qualities: its pervasiveness,

repetition of patterns, and daily, ritualized use by most viewers. "Television has become the primary source of socialization and everyday information (mostly in the form of entertainment) of otherwise heterogeneous populations," he and his collaborators wrote (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994, p. 18). Cultivation studies also have linked television viewing with audiences' perspectives on topics other than violence, including sex roles (Signorielli, 1989), families (Gerbner et al., 1980), and health (Gerbner, Morgan & Signorielli, 1982).

Despite the theory's successes and longevity, it often has sparked criticism. At least one author has expressed doubt that audiences interpret television messages uniformly (Newcomb, 1978). Also at issue is the origin and direction of cultivation effects (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990, Hirsch, 1980a, 1980b; Hughes, 1980; McQuail, 1987). Attitudes and behaviors attributed to cultivation effects, for example, could in fact originate with religious, business or governmental institutions or with viewers themselves, who may gravitate toward media that reflect their predispositions. Still other criticisms have focused on cultivation theory's lack of breadth. Potter (1998) has noted that cultivation theory fails to explain a variety of effects that have been observed in connection with media use, including emotional and physiological effects such as fear or lust. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1994) emphasizes the importance of various factors, including mass media, in shaping human behavior.

Cultivation analysis has been applied to the study of adolescent sexuality, but the findings have been less consistent than in the case of violence. Two studies have linked general television viewing with beliefs or attitudes related to sexual behavior. Courtwright and Baran (1980) found that frequent television viewing was associated with more negative views about remaining a virgin. Signorelli (1991) found a positive relationship between overall television viewing and a desire to get married, have children, and remain married to the same person.

A variety of studies, however, have linked specific types of television programming with sexual beliefs or attitudes. Studies of this type have involved soap operas (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1989; Larson, 1996; Walsh-Childers, 1990), sexually suggestive television shows (Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1989) and music television or videos (Calfkin, Carroll & Schmidt, 1993; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Strouse & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987). Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes (1981), for example, found that frequent viewers of soap operas were more likely than less-frequent viewers to overestimate the pervasiveness of extramarital affairs among men, abortions among women and illegitimate births in the population. More recently, Larson (1996) found that teens who were frequent viewers of soap operas were more likely than other teens to believe that teen mothers have male friends, hold better-than minimum-wage jobs, do not live in poverty, and work in settings that allow on-the-job child care. Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987) found that among young women, frequent viewing of music television was predictive of permissive attitudes about sexual behavior, including agreement that virginity is not important before marriage.

Whether television viewing is linked with sexual behavior remains in question. Several studies have found no relationship between general television viewing and various measures of adolescent sexual permissiveness (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Peterson, Moore & Furstenberg, 1991; Strouse & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1987). The same and other studies, however, linked sexually suggestive television viewing or the use of other sexually suggestive media with variables such as sexual debut, premarital coitus and number of sexual partners (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Peterson & Khan, 1984; Peterson, Moore & Furstenberg, 1991; Strouse & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993).

Little attention has been directed toward possible relationships between media use and contraception or teen pregnancy. One study (Soderman, Greenberg & Linsangen, 1993) found a positive relationship between general television viewing and teen pregnancy.

The same study also linked soap opera viewing with teen pregnancy. Few, if any, studies have examined questions about relationships between media use and contraceptive behavior.

Inconsistencies among the findings are complicated by the age of the studies. Most previous studies were based on data collected before 1990. The only study employing a national sample (Peterson, Moore, & Furstenberg, 1991) relied on data gathered in the mid-1970s. Part of the problem lies in the difficulty of collecting data from adolescent media users. As has been noted, many school systems today shy away from the controversy associated with allowing studies of teen sexual attitudes and behaviors (Strasburger, 1997).

The passage of time also has brought changes in the media environment. Alternatives to television have taken on characteristics that once made television unique, and teens have more control over their media choices. Music has become more portable--and thus more prevalent--through compact discs, lightweight earphones and tiny, battery-operated radios. Videos and video games offer images as compelling as television's without the interference of network censors. Although network television remains popular, it is not as omnipresent as it was. Older adolescents in particular are drawn to other media (Wartella, 1994; Robinson & Bianchi, 1997). These include popular music, which since the 1950s has placed progressively greater emphasis on physical love as opposed to emotional love (Fedler, Hall & Tanzi, 1982), and music videos, half to three-quarters of which deal with love or sexual intimacy (Brown & Campbell, 1986; Sherman & Dominick, 1986). Movies, a favorite entertainment option for many teens and accessible through many video rental stores without proof of age, often include depictions of sexual intercourse. In one study of films popular among teenagers, sexual intercourse among unmarried partners occurred on average eight times per film (Greenberg, Siemicki, Dorman, Heater, Stanly, Soderman, & Linsangen, 1993). Perhaps responding to the competition, television networks have spiced up their programming (Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Rideout & Hoff, 1996). Although explicit sexual behaviors still are rare on the shows teens watch most frequently, today's sitcoms and soap operas contain more sexual innuendo than those of previous decades,

when most cultivation research took place. Talk shows, found on both television and radio, have provided a new source of sexually suggestive material (Greenberg, Sherry, Busselle, Huilo & Smith, 1997).

This study examines questions related to the cultivation of sexual attitudes and behaviors in view of these inconsistencies and changes. Specifically, the study asks: (1) Does general television viewing among adolescents correlate with attitudes about sexual debut, contraceptive use and teen pregnancy? (2) Does general television viewing correlate with sexual behaviors, including sexual debut, contraceptive use, and teen pregnancy? and (3) Is sexually suggestive media use or general media use more closely associated with sexual attitudes and behaviors than is television viewing alone?

Method

Sample. The cross-sectional data employed in this study were obtained through the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997). Participants included 12,118 adolescents in grades 7 through 12 drawn from 80 high schools plus their associated middle schools. The public use sample on which this analysis is based included 6,504 cases, though questions about sexual attitudes and some sexual behaviors were asked only of participants age 15 and older. Each case was weighted so that the sample is representative of adolescents attending grades 7 through 12 in the United States at the time of the survey. The weighting scheme included adjustments for non-responses and for race-ethnicity based on Census Bureau estimates of each grade-sex-race population. Interviews were completed in the adolescents' homes, between April and December 1995, using laptop computers to encourage candor and protect confidentiality.

Measures. Media variables available from the survey included self-reported hours of television viewing, radio listening, video viewing and video-game playing. These were used both singly and in combination. For the measure of general media use, the four media variables were summed to produce total media hours. For the measure of sexually suggestive media use, radio and video hours were summed to produced sexually suggestive

media hours. Based on previous content analyses of sexual content in various media, radio, a traditional medium for popular music, and videos, with their frequent depictions of sexual intercourse among unmarried partners, were deemed to be more sexually suggestive than television or video games.

The dependent variables included three perception variables, perceived benefits of sexual activity, perceived obstacles to contraceptive use, and perceived consequences of pregnancy, which were composites of several questions asked in the survey. The other dependent variables reflected sexual behaviors: sexual debut, effective condom use with first/last intercourse, and pregnancy. A more detailed description of these measures is contained in Table 1.

Control measures varied according to the dependent variable. They consisted of demographic variables such as age, race, and gender, and domain-specific variables (See Table 1). The inclusion of these measures in each model was based on their association with the dependent variable as identified in previous studies of sexual attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, Tabor, Beuhring, Sieving, Shew, Ireland, Bearinger, & Udry, 1997). Variables entered as controls in the equation testing the relationship between media use and the perceived benefits of sexual activity, for example, were the following demographic variables: gender, age, appearance, race/ethnicity, family structure, and poverty status. Domain-specific controls were: parent-family connectedness; family suicide attempts/completions; parental regulation of television; perceived parental disapproval of adolescent sex; perceived parental disapproval of contraception; peer connectedness; school connectedness; grade point average; paid work greater than or equal to 20 hours a week; religious identity; perceived risk of untimely death; and virginity pledge.

Analysis strategy. Responses to questions about perceptions were analyzed using standard multiple regression. After screening the data to ensure that the data met assumptions for regression analysis, the analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 8.0 (Windows). Responses to questions about

behaviors, which were posed in a yes-or-no format, were analyzed using logistic multiple regression and Stata, version 5.0.

Variables were entered in the following order: (1) dependent variable; (2) demographic variables; (3) media variables; and (4) domain-specific variables.

In addition, to test the possibility that attitudes about sexuality might function as mediators of sexual behaviors, three logistic regressions involving sexually suggestive media hours were rerun with the addition of related attitudinal variables: perceived benefits of sexual activity, perceived obstacles to condom use, and perceived consequences of pregnancy, respectively. The attitudinal variables were entered in the regression equations after the domain-specific variables. If mediation occurred, perceptions about sexuality would account for the relationships between media use and sexual behavior. This would be demonstrated statistically if a significant relationship between media use and sexual behavior failed to remain significant after the perception variable was added to the model. If the variables behaved independently, media use and perceptions about sexuality would have direct and largely unrelated effects on sexual behavior. Independent effects would be indicated statistically if media use and perceptions were significantly associated with sexual behavior both with and without controlling for the other.

Findings

Sexual attitudes. The multiple regression results for attitudes about sexuality are presented in Table 1. Results are presented for three measures of media use that were tested: television viewing hours; sexually suggestive media hours; and video game hours. Television viewing hours was not significantly associated with perceived benefits of sexual activity ($t = 1.565$, $p < .118$), nor with perceived obstacles to contraceptive use ($t = -.258$, $p < .796$), nor with perceived consequences of pregnancy ($t = -1.113$, $p < .266$).

However, sexually suggestive media hours was significantly associated with perceived benefits of sexual activity ($t = 2.632$, $p < .01$). The association held despite

controlling for a wide range of other potentially important explanatory variables, including demographics, perceptions and influences of families, peers and communities. This finding suggests that the more adolescents use sexually suggestive media, the more they perceive benefits of sexual activity. The converse also could apply, because these data are only cross-sectional, and thus, it is not possible to say with conviction whether media use or perceived benefits occurred first. Sexually suggestive media hours was not associated with attitudes about either contraceptive use ($t = 1.568$, $p < .117$) or the consequences of pregnancy ($t = .005$, $p < .996$).

Total media hours (hours spent using television, radio, videos or video games) was significantly associated with perceived benefits of sexual activity ($t = 4.480$, $p < .001$) but not with perceived obstacles to contraceptive use ($t = 1.697$, $p < .090$) nor perceived consequences of pregnancy ($t = -1.275$, $p < .202$). This finding suggests that the more adolescents use media in general, the more they perceive benefits of sexual activity. It also may suggest that the more adolescents perceive benefits of sexual activity, the more they use the media.

Sexual behaviors. Regression results for sexual behaviors are presented in Table 2. Television viewing hours contributed significantly to the model for sexual debut ($z = -2.912$, $p < .01$) but was associated with a decreased odds (.73) of sexual debut. Television viewing hours did not contribute significantly to the models for either effective contraceptive use ($z = -.461$, $p < .644$) or pregnancy ($z = 1.703$, $p < .089$).

However, sexually suggestive media hours contributed significantly to the model for sexual debut ($z = 3.947$, $p < .001$) and was associated with an increased odds (1.5) of sexual debut. Sexually suggestive media hours also contributed to the model for pregnancy ($z = -1.981$, $p < .05$) but was associated with a decreased odds (.60) of pregnancy. Again, the relationships held despite controlling for a wide variety of other potential explanations for the behaviors. These findings indicate that television viewing is associated with a decreased risk of sexual debut during high school. Sexually suggestive media use is

associated with an increased risk of sexual debut during high school, but a decreased risk of pregnancy.

No significant relationships were detected between the use of sexually suggestive media and effective contraception. Neither was total media hours associated with any sexual behavior.

Mediators. The analysis provided little evidence that perceptions about sexuality mediate relationships between media use and sexual behavior. When perceived benefits of sexual activity was added to the regression equation for sexual debut, the odds ratio for television viewing decreased only slightly, to .71 from .73, $p < .01$. The odds ratio for sexually suggestive media hours remained at 1.5, but the level of significance declined to $p < .01$ from $p < .001$. Thus, the evidence is stronger that media use and perceptions about sexual activity contribute independently to sexual debut.

In the case of teen pregnancy, the odds ratio for sexually suggestive media hours lost significance after perceived consequences of pregnancy was introduced into the model. More specifically, sexually suggestive media hours modestly increased the odds of teen pregnancy in the absence of the perception variable (.60, $p < .05$), but was nonsignificant as a factor in the full model (.68, $p < .159$). This result supports the contention that sexually suggestive media hours is associated with a reduced risk of pregnancy after controlling for perceptions. However, in the absence of a significant association between sexually suggestive media hours and perceived consequences of pregnancy (see sexual attitudes section, above), this finding provides no evidence that the perception variable mediates the relationship between sexually suggestive media use and teen pregnancy.

In the case of effective contraceptive use with first/last intercourse, neither television viewing nor the use of sexually suggestive media contributed significantly to the behavior variable either before or after controlling for perceived obstacles to contraceptive use. Thus, there was no evidence that media use contributes to effective contraception either independently or through the perception variable.

Limitations

The findings discussed below are limited by several aspects of the data. First, the data are representative of adolescents who were present in class at the time of the initial school survey. They do not include absentees, runaways or incarcerated teens, who may be more likely than their peers to engage in sexually risky behaviors. In addition, the media variables do not include several of the most sexually suggestive media that teens enjoy. In particular, exposure to teen magazines, movies, and the Internet is not reflected. The wording of the question about video use is potentially ambiguous. Respondents were simply asked to report the number of hours they "viewed videos each week," without specifying type. Consequently, the use of exercise videos, for example, may have been included with music videos.

Also, media use hours are based on self-reports. In a small percentage of cases, more hours of media use were reported than hours in a week. However, in some homes, television and radio remain on throughout the day, and family members listen to them and use other media concurrently. Also, all reports for use of individual media fell within reasonable limits and were consistent with previously reported figures. Finally, because the second wave of Add Health survey data was not available to the public at the time of the analysis, this study is based on cross-sectional data. Cross-sectional data allow only for interpretations about relationships between variables; the direction of causality cannot be firmly established.

Discussion

Keeping these limitations in mind, several findings related to relationships, mechanisms, and measures merit discussion. A summary of the findings is provided in Table 3.

This study examines a premise suggested by cultivation theory, the idea that general television viewing helps to shape adolescents' views of sexuality. Based on a large sample and employing extensive control measures, this study offers little evidence that television

alone cultivates sexual attitudes in the same way that it cultivates attitudes related to violence. Based on these data, the amount of time that adolescents spend viewing television each week is not related to their sexual attitudes. Neither is television viewing associated with increased sexual risk. Television viewing relates to one type of sexual behavior--sexual debut--but the association is negative rather than positive, indicating decreased risk. One possible explanation for this finding is that adolescents who spend long hours watching television forgo opportunities for social involvement with their peers.

Important to the interpretation of these findings is the unequal distribution of sexually suggestive material in television programming. Soap operas, for example, contain more references to sexual relationships and pregnancy than do quiz shows or sports programs, which also are popular among teens. Other media, especially rock music and popular films, contain more frequent and graphic references to sexual relationships than does television.

Thus, it remains possible that specific types of television viewing or media use may be related to sexual attitudes and behaviors. This possibility is supported both by this study and by previous studies of sexual behaviors involving sexually suggestive media (See, for example, Strouse & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1993). This study links sexually suggestive media use--here defined as radio and video use--with perceptions that sexual activity is beneficial to young people. Moreover, total media use--television, radio, video, and video games--also is linked with such perceptions. Sexually suggestive media use and total media use are not associated with attitudes about contraception or pregnancy. This finding is not surprising, given that references to either subject rarely occur in these media. Because linkages do not occur in the absence of sexual content, this finding bolsters the argument that sexual content rather than some other attribute of media contributes to attitudes about sexuality. Sexually suggestive media use is associated with a decreased risk of pregnancy, a finding that is unexpected in light of the linkages between sexually suggestive media use, perceptions about the benefits of sexual activity, and sexual debut. However, this finding is consistent

with a smaller, previous study indicating that pregnant teens view fewer sexually suggestive television shows than non-pregnant teens (Soderman, Greenberg, & Linsangen, 1993).

This study also examined mechanisms through which media may influence sexual behaviors. These data demonstrate that sexually suggestive media can contribute directly to sexual behavior. In the case of sexual debut, sexually suggestive media contributed independently, as did television viewing hours. In the case of teen pregnancy, sexually suggestive media use was linked with behavior, but there was no evidence that sexually suggestive media contribute to teen pregnancy through a mediator. In terms of theory, the findings provide no evidence of a causal path connecting the use of sexually suggestive media with teen pregnancy. However, the study does provide evidence that television viewing and sexually suggestive media contribute independently to sexual debut. That is, each media variable contributes directly to sexual debut rather than through adolescents' perceptions about the benefits of sexual activity. Considered with the findings about relationships, the mediator tests support the work of theorists such as Potter (1998), who has contended that effects of media can extend beyond the cultivation of beliefs and attitudes. The findings conflict with cultivation theory, which suggests that if media influence behaviors at all, they influence through perceptions.

Overall, these findings provide greater support to social cognitive theory than to cultivation theory. As Bandura maintained, behavior adoption or change is facilitated by modeling or demonstrating a behavior. Thus, sexually suggestive media, with more graphic depiction of sexual behaviors and occasional references to contraception, are linked with attitudes about sexual activity and in some cases with sexual behaviors. As Gerbner argued, attitudes may well be shaped by consistent messages conveyed repeatedly through a compelling medium. However, television's depiction of sexuality is less graphic than its depiction of violence, which has been the focus of most cultivation research. Sexual activity is more often implied than shown explicitly, contraception rarely is mentioned, and

pregnancy is a focus primarily of afternoon soap operas. In addition, television is not necessarily the medium of choice among many of today's adolescents.

In practical terms, these findings suggest that future studies of the media's effects on adolescent sexuality should include measures of other kinds of media and specific television genres rather than television viewing hours alone. Television suggests rather than depicts many sexual behaviors and seldom mentions others. The best measures would most likely reflect the media use patterns of the study's participants. An ideal measure of sexually suggestive media use among teens, for example, might include not only radio and video use but also teen magazines,"skin" magazines, and R- and X-rated movies. The content of the media also should be considered. The content should relate to the beliefs or attitudes being investigated. For example, it makes little sense to seek relationships between television viewing and sexual behavior among teens whose television viewing is limited primarily to sports. By the same token, it is unreasonable to expect relationships between television viewing and condom use if television never depicts or mentions condoms.

In summary, this study suggests that media use can be linked with attitudes about sexuality among adolescents, but that the sexual content of the media matters. Television, which contains less frequent and graphic references to sexual behavior, is not associated with attitudes congruent with sexual risk. However, more sexually suggestive media are. This study also links sexually suggestive media use with early sexual debut, a behavior that increases adolescents' likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or of becoming pregnant. At the same time, the study highlights the potential of media to reduce sexually risky attitudes and behaviors. If media convey messages conducive to sexual risk, it seems reasonable that those same media can carry messages conducive to less-risky behavior. More attention should be focused on prosocial uses of media in the realm of sexual risk. Such uses include not only public service announcements but also the presentation of youthful models who practice safer sex.

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Table 1

Sexual Attitudes as a Function of Media Use and Other Variables
(Standardized Beta Coefficients)

	Perceived Benefits of Sexual Activity (n = 3,588)	**Perceived Obstacles to Contraceptive Use** (n = 3,928)	**Perceived Consequences of Pregnancy** (n = 1,716)
Media			
Television viewing hours	.062	-.004	-.027
Sexually suggestive media hours	.042**	.024	-.002
Video game hours	.002	—+	—
Demographic			
Female	-.350***	-.174***	-.126***
Age	.037*	-.090***	-.002
Appearance	.009	—	—
Same-sex orientation	—	.042**	—
Black	.036	-.086**	-.284***
Asian	-.022	.119**	.106
Hispanic	.046	.079**	.008
Two-parent family	.003	—	—
Poverty status	.001	.042**	-.013
Domain-specific			
Parent-family connectedness	.099***	.054**	—
Family suicide attempts/completions	-.034*	.007	—
Parental regulation of television	-.030*	.066***	.018
Parental disapproval of teen sex	.103***	.056**	—
Parental disapproval of teen contraceptio	.048**	-.228***	-.110***
Peer connectedness	-.052***	.019	-.048*
Peer knowledge of contraceptive use	—	.129***	—
School connectedness	.063***	.062***	—
Grade point average	.002	.087***	—
Paid work > or + 220 hours/week	.043**	—	—
Religious identity	.070***	-.004	—
Perceived risk of untimely death	.012	.084***	—
Virginity pledge	-.171***	—	—
Sex education	—	-.010	—
Parent-adolescent activities	—	—	.060*
Time since sexual debut	—	—	-.121***
Effective contraceptive use	—	—	.100***

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.
+ Dash denotes variable not included in model.

Table 2

Sexual Behaviors as a Function of Media Use and Other Variables
(Odds Ratios)

	Sexual Debut (n = 5,579)	**Contraceptive use** (n = 2,133)	**Pregnancy** (n = 948)
Media			
Television viewing hours	(d) .728**	n.s.	n.s.
Sexually suggestive media hours	1.490***	n.s.	(d) .599*
Demographic			
Female	1.385***	(d) .679***	—+
Age	1.039***	n.s.	n.s.
Appearance	1.268***	—	—
Same-sex orientation	—	n.s.	—
Black	2.164***	1.594***	n.s.
Asian	(d) .566***	(d).429**	n.s.
Hispanic	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Two-parent family	n.s.	—	—
Poverty	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Domain-specific			
Parent-family connectedness	2.645***	n.s.	—
Family suicide attempts/completions	1.763**	n.s.	—
Parental regulation of television	(d) .698*	n.s.	n.s.
Parental disappproval of adolescent sex	3.786***	n.s.	n.s.
Parental disapproval of adolescent contraception	1.892***	n.s.	—
Peer connectedness	(d) .667***	n.s.	n.s.
School connectedness	1.413***	n.s.	—
Grade point average	3.021***	n.s.	—
Paid work > or = 20 hours/week	1.473***	—	—
Religious identity	n.s.	n.s.	—
Perceived risk of untimely death	n.s.	(d) .457*	—
Virginity pledge	(d) .271***	—	—
Peers' knowledge of condom use	—	(d) .389**	—
Sex education	—	n.s.	—
Parent-adolescent activities	—	—	n.s.
Time since sexual debut	—	—	1.332***
Effective contraceptive use with first/last intercours	—	—	(d) .448***

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.
+ Dash deenotes variable not included in model.
d Denotes decreased odds.

Table 3

Relationships Between Media Use, Sexual Attitudes, and Sexual Behaviors

Among Teens: A Summary

	Media		
	Television Viewing Hours/ Week	Total Media Hours/Week (TV + Radio + Video + Video Game Hours)	Sexually Suggestive Media Hours/Week (Radio + Video Hours)
Attitudes			
Perceived benefits of sexual activity	No*	**Yes (+)**	**Yes (+)**
Perceived obstacles to contraceptive use	No	No	No
Perceived consequences of pregnancy	No*	No*	No
Behaviors			
Sexual debut	**Yes (-)**	No	**Yes (+)**
Effective contraceptive use with first/last intercourse	No	No	No
Pregnancy	No*	No	**Yes (-)**

* Close, but nonsignificant.

Appendix 1-A

Dependent and Media Variables

	Selected Descriptors	No. of Items in Composite Variable (Reliability Coefficient)+	Range	Mean
Dependent				
Perceived benefits of sexual activity	On 5-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), having sex would relax you, give you physical pleasure, make you more attractive, make you less lonely	5 (alpha = .70)	5-25	14.41
Perceived obstacles to contraceptive use	On a 5-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), birth control is a hassle to use, too expensive, interferes with pleasure, requires too much planning ahead, conveys that you are looking for sex	7 (alpha =.76)	8-40	18.47
Perceived consequences of pregnancy	Pregnancy: one of the worst things that could happen at this time, would be embarrassing, would force growing up too fast	8 (alpha = .72)	8-40	29.16
Sexual debut	Those who ever had consensual sexual intercourse, except those who reported first intercourse at an age younger than 11 years	1	0-1*	0.38
Effective contraceptive use with first/last intercourse	Use of oral contraceptive pills, Norplant, Depo-Provera, intrauterine device condoms or condom plus female barrier with first or last sex (response categories: neither, 1, or both occasions)	1	0-1*	0.54
Pregnancy	Among sexually experienced females > or = 15 yrs, those who have ever been pregnant	1	0-1*	0.20
Media				
Television viewing hours	Reported hours/week viewed television	1	0-99	16.21
Video viewing hours	Reported hours/week viewed videos	1	0-99	4.45
Video game playing hours	Reported hours/week played video or computer games	1	0-99	2.88
Sexually suggestive media hours	Reported hours/week listened to radio or watched videos (summed)	2	0-198	21.60
Total media hours	Reported hours/week watched television or videos, played video or computer games or listened to radio (summed)	4	0-198	35.31

* Dichotomous yes-no variable

+ Chronbach's alpha was computed where necessary to assess variables' internal consistency.

Appendix 1-B

Demographic Variables

	Selected Descriptors	No. Items in Composite Variable	Range	Mean
Demographic				
Gender	Reported gender, confirmed by observation	1	0-1*	.516
Age in months	Based on time of survey and calculated from birth date	1	137-256	192.455
Appearance	Reported physical development (response categories: look younger than most; younger than some; about average; older than some; older than most)	1	1-5	3.218
Race/ethnicity	Reported race (response categories; White; Black or African American; American Indian or Native American; Asian or Pacific Islander; and Other); reported "best" racial category; reported Hispanic or Latino origin	3		
Black	Black or African American v. non-Hispanic white		-1 to 1	-.355
American Indian	American Indian or Native American v. non-Hispanic white		-1 to 1	-.584
Asian	Asian or Pacific Islander v. non-Hispanic white		-1 to 1	-.558
Hispanic	Reported Hispanic or Latino origin v. non-Hispanic white		-1 to 1	-.479
Other	Reported race or ethnicity other than above		-1 to 1	-.585
Family structure	Two parents or substitutes in the home v. two not in the home	22	0-1*	.718
Poverty	One or more parents on welfare v. neither parent on welfare	2	0-1*	.101
Same-sex attraction/behavior	Ever had same-sex attraction or intercourse	3	0-1*	.067

* Dichotomous yes-no variable

Appendix 1-C

Domain-specific Variables

	Selected Descriptors	No. of Items in Composite Variable (Reliability Coefficient)+	Range	Mean
Parent-family connectedness	Closeness to mother and/or father; perceived caring by mother and/or father; satisfaction with relationships to parent(s); feeling loved and wanted by family	13 (alpha = .80)	7.33-26	23.22
Suicide	Over last 12 mo, suicide attempts and/or completions by family members	2	0-1*	0.05
Perceived parent disapproval of adolescent sex	On a 5-point scale, perceived mother's and/or father's disapproval of their adolescent's having sex now with anyone or special person	2 (alpha = .82)	2-10	8.66
Perceived parent disapproval of adolescent contraception	On a five-point scale, perceived mother's and/or father's disapproval of their adolescent's using contraception at this time	2	1-5	3.34
Parent regulation of television	Parents' regulation of their adolescent's choice of TV programming or hours spent viewing	2	1-3	2.60
Peer connectedness	Having gone to closest same-sex friend's house hung out with him/her; spent time with him/ her on weekends; consulted him/her about a problem/ talked by phone with him/her	5 (alpha = .72)	0-5	3.11
School connectedness	Feel that teachers treat students fairly; feel close to people at school; feel part of school	8 (alpha = .79)	8-40	29.41
Grade point average	Based on most recent report, available grades in English, math, science, history	4	1-4	2.80
Paid work > or = 20 hours/week	In a non-summer week, reported hours spent working for pay (1 = 20 or more hrs.)	1	0-1*	0.19
Religious identity	Pray frequently; view self as religious; affiliated with a religion	3	0-7	4.60
Virginity pledge	Made public or written pledge to remain a virgin until married (1 = yes)	1	0-1*	.131
Perceived risk of untimely death	Perception of self at risk for untimely death	2	2-10	3.28
Peers' knowledge of condom use	On a 5-point scale, agreement that closest friends are quite knowledgeabout about correct use of condom	1	1-5	3.89
Sex education	Taught about pregnancy or AIDS in a class at school (1 indicates one or both topics taught)	2	0-1*	.947
Parent-adolescent activities	Number of activities engaged in with mother or father in past week (summed)	9 for mother; 9 for father	0-18	6.11
Time since sexual debut in months	Interval between first intercourse and date of survey	4	0-110	22.52
Perceived consequences of pregnancy	Pregnancy would be embarrassing; would be stressful and difficult; would force wrong marriage; would force quitting school	8 (alpha = .70)	10.29-40	29.38

* Dichotomous yes-no variable

+ Chronbach's alpha was computed where necessary to assess variables' internal consistency.

Entertainment Studies

Focus Group Analysis: Can It Help Explain Present Audience Discontent With Broadcast Network Television?

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Focus Group Analysis: Can It Help
Explain Present Audience Discontent with
Broadcast Network Television?

This study used focus groups to investigate audiences dissatisfaction with the major U.S. broadcast networks. The study found a strong perceived lack of variety. However, the term variety actual meant three separate things. While participants gave lip service to a separation between news and entertainment, follow up questions indicate they see no real. Participants had strong anti-business sentiments based on the belief that networks and producers held them in contempt. While participants strongly objected to sex and violence, they could not agree on what represented objectionable content.

Focus Group Analysis: Can It Help Explain Present Audience Discontent With Broadcast Network Television?

While interpreting television audience behavior has always been difficult, over the last two decades it has, at times, seemed impossible. Changing network viewing patterns, increased competition and a technological revolution have altered what until the 1970s were a remarkably stable set of viewing variables (U.S. Office of Telecommunications Policy, 1973) and have caused a reevaluation of present audience research and basic methodology. Yet, as many studies show, since 1976 nothing the broadcast networks have done has slowed the audience shift away from the major networks for long, or been fully able to account for where these people are going (Robins, 1991; Adams, 1990; Schlosser, 2001; Kissinger, 1991; Miller, 1991; Metzger, 1983; Foisie, 1994; Albarron, Pilcher, Steele and Weis, 1991; Heeter and Greenberg, 1985; Henke and Donohue, 1989).

Traditionally the major networks have explained the loss as sampling error or by pointing out the difference between "total" audience and "broadcast network" audience, thus attributing any change to growing competition while still insinuating that overall audience consumption is still the same as always. The analogy of a one store town which suddenly gets several new stores has been used, thus suggesting that the number of shoppers hasn't changed, they have just spread out. However, recent surveys by the Gallup Poll suggest this may not be true. For example, a January 2000 survey found significantly less reported total time spent viewing than in the past (Gillespie, 2000).

In any case, while blaming audience change on increased competition might be satisfying and may even be able to account for at least part of the falling ratings, it does little to explain why that loss occurred, particularly if one considers the fact that most alternatives have limited reach, program mainly material originally run on the broadcast networks (i.e. reruns) and charge sizable fees, while ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB and UPN produce mainly original programming that is ostensibly free, and four of these broadcast networks can reach over 90 percent of the country with no special equipment other than an antenna . The continuing loss of audience therefore means an ever increasing number of people would rather pay for reruns, hunt down hard to find channels, or are leaving the system altogether, rather than take the original programming the broadcast networks are giving away. This has to be looked upon as an extraordinary failure and not just the equivalent of another store opening in town.

The increasing competition explanation also cannot account for the growing negative image of television in general. For example, a Louis Harris poll conducted for Life magazine in 1971 indicated the majority of people felt TV was basically good and, while there were some early warnings of possible future trouble, most viewers felt the networks were improving from year to year (Harris, 1971). Since that time Gallup has recorded a continual decline in the media's image until by 1990 their poll found the majority of people considered the medium harmful and getting worse each year (Gallup and Newport, 1990). By 1999, 65 percent of the people in a Gallup survey placed some blame on television for teenage violence, with 79 percent placing some blame in specific cases such as the Littleton, Colorado shootings. Perhaps more important from a media point of view, 56 percent of those people called for government regulation (as compared with 49 percent calling for regulation of movies) (Newport, May 10, 1999). In another survey, 65 percent of the subjects believed the news has problems getting their facts straight (up from only 34 percent in 1985) with majority of viewers now looking to cable, not broadcast networks, as the most important source for news (Newport, December 8, 2000). And, while only 51 percent of viewers feel the networks are biased (up about four points over the last 5 years), 68 percent of Republicans think there is biases. On the other hand, only 40 percent of Democrats see such a problem (Newport, Dec. 8, 2000). (This difference in and of itself may be much more important than the total percentage).

This decline in prestige was not limited just to the networks, as their affiliates also seem to be dropping fast in the public's estimation. A Broadcast/Cable study of 15 top local markets found the viewers gave most stations only mediocre grades, complaining of a lack of innovation, a lack of breadth, a lack of sources for news stories, a lack of balance and so on (Trigoboff, 2000). The findings lead the author to ask:

> Is the commitment to maintain sky high profit margins causing local television to abandon its commitment to the elements that created those profits - to the industries own detriment (Trigoboff, 2000, p. 104).

The same could be asked of the broadcast networks, as polling information has shown many of the same objections being aimed at them (Gallup, 1999).

On the other hand, polls also show television is still the number one choice for how to spend an evening (Newport, March1, 1999) , and while audiences objected strongly to things such as violence, profanity and stereotyping in the general sense (up to 80 percent objection) the numbers dropped off sharply when the survey

asked about more specific areas like nudity (Carlson, 1999). Indeed, while terms like variety, stereotyping and violence seem self explanatory, their meanings may not be that simple. For example, while trying to deal with the concept of audience, Webster (1998) found that: "changing technology and intellectual paradigms have threatened to upset the apple cart of established practices in industrial research and marketing." He suggested crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries to better understand basic media concepts, and found at least three different definitions for (or types of) audience.

Even when audience and advertiser objections seem clear, do they mean anything to network programers? Audience objections to sex have been relatively constant for the last decade, yet a Kaiser Foundation study found that by 2001 over 2/3 of all broadcast prime time shows involved sex, up from just 50 percent only three years earlier. At the same time, while the networks gave lip service to the idea, there was virtually no consideration for "safe" sex or acknowledgment that there are health risks involved with promiscuity. Programmer explanations for the jump were simple; "Sex Sells," this in spite of objections from companies like Procter and Gamble (Ault, 2001) and the fact that programs such as Ally McBeal went down in the ratings as the emphases on sex went up (based on data taken from Broadcast Watch, Broadcasting/Cable for 2000 and 2001).

In short, it seems Craig (1993) may have been right when he said: "The field remains in ferment and more than ever requires rethinking." He was supported in this view by Philip Meyer (1994) who asserted that too much audience research has served an economic (meaning setting advertising rates), or placebo effect (i.e. to reassure decision makers that the choices they have already made were right), rather than trying to explain audience behavior. This view was actually a basic restatement of Hurwitz's (1984) early claimed that media research had become very good at generating "random numbers." Deborah Solomon (Schlosberg, 1993), former chairman of the Advertising Research Foundation's Children's Research Committee, went even further stating broadcasters actively discourage real research when it comes to the audience as they are afraid of what they might find.

This is not to say reasons for present audience behavior have not been offered. Dozens of researchers, critics and media insiders have offered explanations for the changing audience patterns found in television today (Carter, 1990; O'Connor, 1991; Grimes, 1991; Jankowski, 1993; Coe, 1993; Gallup, 1999). As early as 1985, the

New York Times tried to summarized possible reasons for shifting audiences into eight categories:

1) Competition -- there are more options now for viewers to choose from resulting in a natural spreading out of the audience, but there is no real change in the overall viewing patterns if one takes into account cable, the VCR and computer use.

2) Restlessness -- The audience has developed a shorter attention span, leading to channel hopping and tuning out.

3) The MTV factor -- The audience demands more visual stimulation and less plot and character development than in the past, thus making it harder to produce successful serious works.

4) Impatience -- The audience is less willing to put up with boring programs and the constant shifting of the schedule. As a result they tune out.

5) Quality -- The networks have turned to programs that titillate but which are not well done. Because of the VCR, the public no longer has to put up with this.

6) Variety -- the networks tend to copy whatever is popular at the moment, resulting in low levels of program variety which satisfies an increasingly smaller portion of the viewing public.

7) Dislike of the networks -- some industry observers have concluded that an audience, already antagonistic toward the media, will not be lied to and continue to watch. In short, the networks can no longer make promises they don't live up to and expect the audience to stay.

8) Monetary Concerns -- The networks are concentrating on less costly program types and fewer episodes, thus leading to more reruns and a reliance on genres that do not hold up over time (TV Watching is Different, 1985).

Most recently, Gallup added one more reason to this list, suggesting the Internet was the culprit when it came to diminished audiences (Gillespie, 2000).

The problem is, that while all of these position can be supported by logical arguments, there is very little research to either support or disprove any of them. At this point they are little more than shared opinions. It is also true that some of them (reasons 3 and 5 for example) seem to be diametrically opposed to each other.

This seeming inability to generate data that can answer the question of why the audience behaves the way

it does, particularly with regards to the major broadcast networks, has led some to call for a change in methodology. Schlosberg (1993) went furthest when he suggested dropping quantitative research altogether in favor of qualitative methodology. He argued that trying to determine audience tastes and thinking was an art, not a science that could be reduced to numbers. This view received some unusual and unintended support from CBS's chief programmer at the time Peter Tortorici (Programming Special Report, 1991) who said: "So much of it [programming] is intuitive feeling, unquantifiable by numbers." Other researchers such as Morgan (1988), Wolcott (1990), Livingstone (1993), Morley (1993) and Craig (1993) agree with the need to try qualitative methodology, but do not reject quantitative research as such. They believe the two methods working together can perhaps explain what neither method has been able to explain on its own, and point to the successful use of the combined methods in advertising, political science and marketing.

The concerns expressed by these people do seem to be resinating within the academic community. Indeed, Pardun's (2000) survey of the Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media found a sudden increase over the last couple of years in the number of respondent based qualitative studies being used to investigate basic media questions. She also found a wider range of people doing qualitative research and combining it with quantitative work.

Qualitative work by Adams (2000) indicated traditional media theories such as habit formation, flow, channel or network loyalty and repeat viewing may have little to do with how people decide what to watch or, as in the case of habit formation, may be looking at the wrong variables. Qualitative work by Massey (1995) even suggested the most advanced needs and gratification models were to simplistic when it came to explaining audience reasoning as it relates to viewing. However, more important to this particular study are the works of Collins (1997) and Bielby, Harrington and Bielby (1999) who's qualitative works showed participants were able to express complicated reasoning patterns when it comes to specific programs and entire genres. If people are able to provide detailed information concerning likes, dislikes and the directions being taken for individual series like Murphy Brown or entire genres like Soap Operas, then they may also be able to provide detailed information on what, in their opinion, has gone wrong at the network level.

Can qualitative methodology provide support for any of the opinions put forth to explain present audience

patterns? Can such methods help explain the seeming contradictions found in some quantitative work and theory or suggest new areas of concern or questions that should be asked? In short, can qualitative research help us better understand the audience's cognitive processes when it comes to television viewing patterns, and, more specifically, can it help explain the present resentment for broadcasting?

Method

Types of Qualitative Study

While qualitative research has been widely used in marketing, advertising and even to some extent in program development, it is relatively new to the field of television audience research, a field heavily based on numbers such as shares, rankings, demographics and ratings. As a result, even though Herzog's (1942) original qualitative studies were done to better understand the radio soap opera audience, there has been little since then to build on when selecting a method. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the qualitative methodologies themselves in order to determine the best method for evaluating the audience's reasoning for viewing or not viewing. When this is done, two qualitative methods suggest themselves. Both in-depth interviewing and focus groups could generate the type of cognitive data required. For this study we chose focus groups. The choice was based on the conditions put forth by Morgan (1988) and by Wimmer & Dominick (1997). They were:

1) The ability to gather a great deal of data from several subgroups within a population in a relatively short amount of time.

2) The ability to generate insight into areas that may not already be well understood.

3) The ability to gain understanding of relatively complicated cognitive processes as they relate to motivation.

4) The ability to generate insights that would not be developed without the group interaction, and

5) Merton, Fiske and Kendall's point that focus groups are very good at interpreting conflicting results in quantitative research (1990).

Pre-tests also revealed there was very little problem with participants conforming their views to other members of the group or being dominated by stronger participants. Participants were willing to discuss the subject as they all had an interest, saw little social threat involved, and all felt qualified on the topic.

The Participants

Twelve focus groups were conducted from 1997 through 1999 using a total of 93 people. This is a large number of participants, but was necessary because of the number of subgroups being evaluated. Groups were first divided into three age brackets:

18 to 24 – representing a group comfortable with new technology.

25 to 43 – representing the so called "ideal" demographic age for network television viewing, and a group who grew up with the media seeing it go through all of its changes, and

44 up – a group with strong ties to the traditional broadcast structure, assumed to be relatively resistant to change and which had known a time before television..

The youngest age group, which represents the main university population, was the easiest to recruit, therefore they were further separated based on sex, race and major. Academic major was included as a subgroup as it was reasoned that communications majors might respond differently from non-communications majors. These 18 to 24 year old participants, 57 people, were recruited from large lecture courses which filled general requirements in a college of arts and sciences.

Another 22 participants were specifically recruited from graduate-student-only courses, from non-traditional students, and from two western communities. These participants ranged in age from 26 to 37. The remaining 14 people, forming two focus groups, were drawn only from the two different western town and ranged in age from 45 to 71. Because of the limited number of participants, these two older age brackets were not divided by sex, race or occupation. However, these subdivision, as it turned out, made no differences in any of the groups. Therefore, the "criterion of redundance," which determines the number of participants needed before focus group data can be interpreted, was reached well before the last group. However, that was not known until all possibilities had been tested.

Participants were told the sessions would take about 90 minutes. They were also told they would be asked to give their opinions concerning the television industry. Each group consisted of no fewer than six nor more than 11 participants. All sessions worked off of the same core of questions, although the moderator was given wide leeway to follow up on topics brought up by the group. Moderators were selected from mass communications

graduate students and were trained by the researcher using trial focus groups. Their performances were evaluated and corrected until they were comfortable with the sessions and possible side issues or questions. The primary researcher conducted the focus groups with the older participants.

Each session started with a brief explanation of the changes in the world of television, pointing out the growth in cable and the VCR and the loss of audience by the major broadcast networks. Subjects were then surveyed as to their access to the various forms of television. This acted as the "effective stimulus" used to get participants thinking along similar lines.

Each focus group covered two major topics:

1) Why are participants watching less of the major networks' programming?

Examples of questions: What do you like most and least about broadcast television?

Why do you think people are watching less broadcast television today?

What do you think are the major problems with programming?

2) What can be done to fix the problems?

Examples of questions: If you were in charge, how would you change TV?

As far as you are concerned, what do you think ideal programming would be like?

What could the major networks do to bring people back?

At the end of each session, the moderator summed up the major points that had come out in the discussion and asked participants if they agreed with those points or if the moderator had missed what they were really saying. All sessions were recorded, and the recordings were transcribed. Moderators also wrote up their own analysis of each session as soon as it was completed. The researcher in charge of the study did the final analysis. Based on Wolcott's (1990) recommendations, two types of analysis were done. The first consisted of simple frequencies which produces the numbers audience researchers are more comfortable with and which can indicate the strength of agreement or disagreement within the groups. The second analysis used the more in-depth ethnographic summary techniques drawing from each moderator's summary and the transcriptions.

Results

Why are Participants Watching Less of the Major Networks' Programming?

The question "What are the broadcast networks doing right?" was always answered in terms of specific programs, but questions concerning what they are doing wrong were answered in terms of scheduling practices and program content. The most remarkable finding was the strength of the agreement among participants across all sub-groups. In each of the cases discussed here, at least 3/4s of all participants were in agreement.

News vs. Entertainment

While participants still gave lip service to a separation between news and entertainment on the broadcast networks, follow-up questions and requests for specific examples make it clear this division no longer really exists in participants' minds. As far as they were concerned, the news is entertainment and concepts such as journalistic integrity, information and fairness have taken a back seat to propaganda and numbers. While many of the participants watched news regularly, few gave it any real credibility. As examples, comments included:

> There really isn't any difference between the news, the talk shows and the National Enquirer anymore.
>
> If they were really interested in facts, NBC wouldn't have blown up that truck - that was NBC wasn't it?
>
> It all numbers now, and news people are stars just like on Friends or any other show.
>
> Everything's sensationalised (sic). If you really listened to the news you'd never let your kids near a school. If the asbestos and lead don't get them the radon gas will.
>
> They've spent so long preaching global warming, you have a normal winter and you'd think the world was coming to an end.
>
> Anyone who doesn't believe there is a double standard when it comes to covering Democrats and Republicans isn't watching.

Variety

In all sessions, a lack of "variety" was the first thing brought up when participants were asked what broadcasters' were doing wrong. However, follow-up questions indicated the term "variety", as it was being used , actually meant three different things: (1) a lack of choice in the types of programs offered, (2) a lack of plots within the shows themselves and (3) a lack of opposing viewpoints on controversial topics. The specific definition depended on the circumstances at the moment.

Lack of Program Type Variety

All subjects felt television concentrated on too few program types to the exclusion of other genres, or as one subject put it, "If they [cable] get to the point where they have the sitcom channel, the news/home video channel and the crime channel--there go the networks." Members of the groups believed that this concentration was the result of a lack of creativity, combined with a copy mentality, or as one subject put it, "all stations just copy off of each other." Other subjects said:

> They copy everything. They come up with something original like 90210, and then multiply it times ten. They never figure out that there are a lot of people who don't like that program.

> Nobody wants to take a chance, they only want to do what's already being done.

Participants further believed that by concentrating on only a few program types the networks caused the genre to burn out. For example:

> The copies and spinoffs, they're usually so stupid. Pretty soon you don't even want to watch the original anymore.

> I really liked Unsolved Mysteries and Rescue 911 at first but now I don't even watch them. Those reality shows, they're all the same thing.

A Lack of Plots

The second concern given under the term variety did not relate directly to a perceived lack in the number of different types of series. Rather, it referred to the variety within the story lines themselves. There was a strong belief that the plots, characters and situations within a genre or within an individual series were just the same thing over and over again. This led to an inability to distinguish between shows, networks and weeks.

> None of them [the programs or networks] have an identity of their own anymore.

> I like the sitcoms, but I get them confused when I turn them on because you can't tell which is which; they all look alike.

> Married With Children, when it first came out I liked it, but it just bottomed out; they're running it into the ground. They, well, all the shows, pick one situation and do it over and over again.

> I'm sick of kids in control, it's like how stupid can you make the parents.

> Murphy Brown was one of my favorites until they started repeating the same basic show over and over.

In the end, the feeling was that this lack of plot variety destroys the show itself by eliminating originality and

freshness.

A Lack of Viewpoints

The last concern over variety was certainly related to the perceived lack of plot diversity, but was much more specific. The majority of participants felt the networks limited the viewpoints that were allowed to air. As one person put it:

> It's like the media has already decided how we should think on lots of things and won't let any other viewpoints be heard.

Participants also strongly agreed on problem areas. This was true even when participants agreed with the "network" view being presented. In the following cases, over three fourths of the participants felt the issue was receiving one sided coverage.

Ecology

> It's like 60 Minutes and the apple thing. Because the story came from an ecology group they didn't check to see if it had any basis in truth.
>
> When it's something pushed by so called ecologists, the media never admits it blew it. That acid rain business, the media pushed that real hard, but they barely mentioned it when the studies indicated the whole thing had been blow out of proportion.

> It's like people in the media don't know trees are a renewable crop.

Male Bashing (Note: Two of these quotes came from women)

> The Clarence Thomas, Anita Hill thing, the media didn't need to know anything except it was a woman against a man and they immediately decided who was telling the truth.

> Remember the Cosby Show, did you ever see one program where he ever won an argument with any woman?

> The talk shows are the worst, but all of the media seems to hate men.

Homosexuality

> The media can't understand that to a lot of people this is a moral, not a civil rights, question.

> I don't approve of heterosexuals sleeping around, but if I suggest that its also wrong for homosexuals then suddenly I'm a bigot.

Race Relations

> As far as race is concerned, TV won't admit anything has changed since the 1950s.

> According to TV the only bigots are white and usually male.

We [blacks] won't have real equality until TV admits that we can be just as bigoted as whites.

Well at least you [blacks] get on [TV]. When was the last time you saw an Asian? TV is still black and white as far as race is concerned.

Oh come on, you can attack anyone on TV, just as long as they are white, male or Christian.

Abortion

All people for abortion are meaningful, intelligent and thoughtful, while all people opposed to it are (religious) fanatics and women haters.

I'm for a woman's right to choose, but I'm sick and tired of the way the media present the issue.

I think that abortion can stand on its own merits, so why is TV so afraid of accurately showing the other side?

Morality

It's like with 90210. A girl picked up a guy on the beach, then when he won't go to bed with her on the first date, the only answer they could come up with was that he must be gay.

Nobody in TV has any morals. You'd think they'd never heard the word "no".

TV talks a lot about the breakdown of the family, but they won't admit they caused it with their endless preaching that no one can really be faithful to just one person.

It's not the sex and violence, it's the way they think about everything. I used to like The Flintstones, but now Barney is just a thief out to push breakfast cereal.

Taking Strong Views

It must be pointed out that the problems indicated in the above quotations were not with the viewpoints themselves. Only three people argued that some viewpoints should not be shown. The majority felt promoting a position was fine and pointed out examples where it had been done well. The problems was a lack of alternatives to the accepted doctrine:

They're not willing to let the other side be heard.

You used to be able to get shows like the Waltons, or Highway to Heaven, or sitcoms that weren't about sex. Not anymore.

In short, the problem was not the issue, but the one-sided and ever present way in which participants felt the issue was handled.

Sex and Violence

The concern with sex and violence proved to be much more complicated than the terms seem to suggest. The majority of participants in every session brought up both as major problems, but that was where agreement ended. Several people point out that the sort of sex the soaps were doing was fine. As one put it, "I enjoy it. I don't want it in every show, but it doesn't bother me in the soaps." Others, while objecting to nudity, went on to point out cases where it was acceptable to them although the examples given were often from movies or cable only networks:

> "I like it when Mel Gibson shows his butt."

Violence proved even harder than sex to deal with as there was no agreement as to what constituted violence. Moreover, all participants could come up with examples where they thought violence was acceptable.

> I saw this cartoon where the villain went around destroying planets and killing billions of people, but the heros couldn't kill him because that would bring them down to his level. Oh come on, that's like going into World War II and saying we mustn't be too rough on those Nazis, they're just misunderstood.

> I get real tired of those shows with cars exploding and machine guns everywhere, yet everybody gets up and wanders off. That sort of violence without consequence does more harm than anything else I can think of.

> No mothers' group tries to censure Shakespeare.

Three fourths of the participants claimed they had turned shows off because of the sex or violence. However, when pressed, it turned out that the shows some participants had stopped watching were the same programs others, equally offended by sex and violence, used as examples of how both could be used correctly. For example, some used NYPD as an example of material that was too violent and sexual, while others felt this realistic portrayal was fine and it was fantasy series like The A-Team and Charlie's Angels that were the problem.

While there was no agreement on which shows had too much violence, there was strong agreement on which shows did not. None of the participants felt slapstick comedy, like Married With Children, or animation, like Bugs Bunny, was violence. (Although, several did object to animation programs such as G.I. Joe and Captain Planet). Participants pointed this out with such lines as:

> All violence isn't the same. [You have to ask] Why are they doing it and what does it have to do with the story?

I don't like people being animated. They're not like Bugs and Daffy. There's a big difference between wabbit [sic] hunting and terrorists out to take over the world.

You can't make everything so that it won't offend a three year old. If there was nothing but Barney the Dinosaur or Mr. Rogers on, then you'd see some real social violence.

While there was unanimous agreement that there was too much sex and violence, it does not seem that it was the sex or violence as such that was bothering these people. Again, what participants actually seemed to be objecting to most was the fact that it was everywhere. As one put it, "You can't get away from it." Another added:

All those sitcoms and yet there isn't even one that doesn't rely on sex for humor.

There was also a strong objection to the use of sex and violence to cover up weak story lines or to cover up a lack of creativity.

Too many writers and producers use it because they don't have any real ideas.

Networks and Producers

When talk turned to the major broadcast networks and to production, the mood in all groups changed dramatically. Until that point, the mood had been relatively light with some joking and friendly arguing over what some participants liked or did not like. That changed almost at once as groups became first serious and then, as discussion got going, hostile. All groups expressed a strong dislike for both the networks and producers based on a strong belief that they both hold viewers in contempt. This was seen in terms of a self appointed East/West coast elite looking down on the rest of the country. The term most often mentioned was "insulting": insulting to our tastes, insulting to our values, insulting to us personally. Many of the comments in this area were related to the perceived lack of alternative viewpoints, but the term "insulting" went beyond that to a feeling that the networks and producers were being patronizing. The following statements indicate how strong this feeling was:

If you don't live in L.A. or New York, the media thinks you're a hick.

It's like the producers don't think we have enough sense to know what's good for us without their help.

I'm getting sick and tired of being insulted because of my age. Every teenager on TV is dumb. None of them have enough brains to turn on the light, much less ever make a living at anything.

It's like they're all saying isn't it too bad you're not as smart as us.

The second concern in this area was a strong feeling that the networks and producers were bad for society.

This finding confirmed what earlier quantitative studies have found, but these participants may indicate why this negative attitude has grown so much in the last 20 years. For example:

> They've lost the way. They don't have any real ideas or values anymore.
>
> I saw that Politically Incorrect once when they were talking about teenagers who refused to have sex until they were married. You know, that host couldn't even conceive of the possibility. I guess that pretty much tells you what those people are like.
>
> I won't allow my kids to watch network TV. The morals are just too low.
>
> Just look at what they have already done. This obsession with sex, drugs, swearing, they pushed all of that into our homes day after day, then claim it's not their fault.
>
> What they want for society and what I want for society aren't the same thing

In short, there seemed to be a strong feeling that the entertainment community, especially as it relates to the major networks, is out of touch with these participants' own values and beliefs and bent on selling a deviant view of things. Some felt this was an attempt by the sex and drug culture of the 60s to continue pushing their message, while others felt it was just plain greed, people doing whatever they thought would make them the most money.

Strangely enough, participants separated television as a medium from the major networks and the California production houses. Virtually all of the people in all groups expressed a great deal of liking for the medium itself and all had favorite shows. Yet, they resented the fact, as they saw it, that the networks were "messing up television." They also separated their own favorite shows from the networks that offered them. This separation was so complete that the majority of participants tended to see their favorite programs as "abnormal" or "something they [the networks] haven't gotten around to ruining yet."

These participants tended to think in terms of the traditional broadcast networks when the term network was used, and channel when talking of cable. In several cases, to illustrate points, they pointed out cases where cable channels were doing things better than the networks.

> ESPN's different, but that's because they only do sports.
>
> There are several cable channels I like. I think they still respect their audience.

They also expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the VCR and its ability to break network control and let them watch what they want when they want.

Now when they put it on when I can't watch I just record it for later.

If there's nothing on I can always get a tape.

What Can Be Done to Fix the Problems?

The second area, looking into what participants felt needed to be done to fix problems, provided very little that the business could really use. However, it did reveal a great deal about how these participants think. None of the participants could answer questions about what types of shows should be offered or what the networks should do to get viewers back, but all felt the key was programming. When pressed for more detail, they responded by naming a show from the past which had offered what they felt was lacking today. When asked if the networks should offer more series like the past one, or perhaps revive the old show, participants invariably said "No." They felt the copies and the revivals would not be as good and would just be a continuation of the present practice of endless copying. Several even pointed out that they preferred reruns of the original to a new copy. What they said they wanted was something new and different, but as well done, and with the same values, as in the past. "The last thing we need is more copies." They all wanted more choice and more variety in the plots offered.

I'd just like to see one new comedy that isn't just like a dozen others.

However, they had very little faith that the networks were capable of correcting the problems.

What's the use. If they do put something good and different on they'll just kill it or rework it until its just like everything else.

While every group brought up the idea of a lack of quality in network programming, they could not agree on what quality was. Indeed, many of the shows used as examples of what the networks were doing right were also used as examples of what went wrong. There was no consensus as to what was a good program. In short, this audience was not monolithic in nature. No single style or small groups of styles could ever satisfy all, or even the majority of them. As is, there is a general feeling that television just isn't very good, and that the business doesn't know what to do about it. But then again, neither does the audience. As one participant put it:

That's not my problem. If they [the networks] want me to fix what's wrong then they can pay me what they're paying them [the programers].

Another said:

I don't know what they should do, but I'll know it when I see it.

Conclusion

It must be understood that these focus groups were all from the Midwest or far West which may make them more conservative than would have been the case if they had been from other regions. There was also a high cable penetration represented in this study (92 percent had at least basic cable) which might affect the results reported here. Would non-cable viewers, those totally dependent on broadcast television, have given similar responses? To answer those questions this study needs to be repeated in other areas of the country to see if the findings are typical or just an abnormality of this one region. However, the answers in this study indicate concerns that could be real problems for the business. They suggest many of the broadcast networks' present troubles may have developed as a result of their own action, or at the very least, through bad public relations. This would suggest the answer to Trigoboff's (2000) question (in essence is the media damaging itself) is yes. For whatever reason, these participants had the impression that there was nothing new on TV, no way under the present system to correct the problem and no real concern for the viewers or the business. Most of the objections from the focus groups centered around a lack of perceived choice and a sense that the medium is more interested in preaching and short term profits than diversity and entertainment. It must be pointed out that participants did not object to strong messages if they were done as part of the story. They did object to what was perceived as party line and to interfering with a plot for the sake of a message. The viewers also seem to have very little faith in the industry's ability to improve, its judgment, or its morals.

The focus groups indicate competition is not the cause of audience decline, but rather a facilitator. New technology just allowed the audience to do what it had wanted to do for a long time. Viewers did not think in terms of networks when it came to viewing choice, but rather in terms of "favorite" programs. Indeed, favorite programs were viewed as separate from the networks, almost as if they were a mistake not yet corrected by a basically malevolent system. How much this feeling actually affects viewing cannot be determined from this study. Participants liked television, they just did not like the business. Further work would have to be done to see how these two variables affect one another.

Explanations for audience shifts, such as a loss of variety, quality, sex and violence proved to be accurate, but much more complicated than the words seem to indicate. Variety, for example, actually represents three

separate concerns. As far as audience reasoning goes, stereotyping, rather than just racial in nature, could well mean the way entire segments of society are portrayed. The participants certainly felt young people, religious people and conservatives were heavily stereotyped. Quality proved undefinable in "mass" terms, and whether or not sex and violence are objectionable seems to be related to the context in which they are used and the individual watching. There was no support found for explanations such as shortened attention spans or a demand for more visual stimulation. The strongest support was for more choice in terms of genre, plots and ideas.

While these participants indicated a strong dislike for the major networks and the production system, this was based on a perceived network and production community contempt for them and their values. Consequently, these viewers were not willing to give the business the benefit of the doubt on virtually any issue.

This belief of participants that they, and their values, are held in contempt by the networks received some unexpected support following the completion of this study when this researcher was sent a copy of an e-mail received by a friend aware of the project that was under way. Apparently the man named had sent an e-mail objecting to an episode of The Practice in which one of the lawyer's mothers decided she was gay and wanted her son to go to court to get a marriage license for her and her partner. The objections to the show were on the basis of religion and the fact that those opposed to the idea were shown as a "dufus." While the letter is included in its entirety in the endnotes, it is the reply which is of more interest to this study[1]. ABC's web is said to have written:

> How about getting your nose out of the Bible (which is ONLY a book of stories compiled by MANY different writers hundreds of years ago) and read the Declaration of Independence (what our nation is built on) where it says "All Men are Created Equal" - and try treating them that way for a change! Or better yet, try thinking for yourself and stop using an archaic book of stories as your lame crutch for your existence. You are in the minority in this country and your boycott will not affect us or our freedom of statement.

Assuming this was an actual network reply (as apposed to some intern being given to much freedom), while one might have expected a condescending response on the order of 'we're sorry you were upset, but we must respect all view points and can't act as censors,' the contempt and hatred for people of religion or who appose this view point is extraordinary. From a simple public relations point of view this reply is a disaster and seems to indicate these participants were right when they said the production and network community hold them and their values in contempt. On the other hand, if this is a fake, an Urban myth being circulated by the Internet, then it indicates the views expressed by the participants in these focus groups are either widely help, or at the very least, seem quite

plausible to a sizable part of the population.

While many did express objections to the cost of alternative media, these participants were not willing to go back to the so called "free" system under any foreseeable circumstances. As one put it: "(with cable) They charge more than its worth, but at least I have a chance of finding something I like." However, participants seemed to be as willing to give up cable as they were to give up the broadcast networks. As one put it:

> Cable talks a lot, but they're just like the networks. They don't actually do anything.

In short, the participants in these groups proved to be a great deal more militant, more specific-program-oriented, more aware of content, and less willing to accept explanations or decisions than had been anticipated based on past audience research or present theory.

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1. My name is Jim Neugent. I wrote to ABC (on-line) concerning a program called The Practice. My Original message was:

ABC is obsessed (or should I say abscessed) with the subject of homosexuality. I will no longer watch any of your attempts to convince the world that homosexuality is OK. THE PRACTICE can be a fairly good show, but last night's program was so typical of your agenda. You picked ht 'dufus' of the office to be the one who was against the idea of his mother being gay and made him look like a whiner because he had convictions. This type of mentality calls people like me a "gay basher.' Read the first chapter of Romans (that's in the Bible) and see what the apostle Paul had to sy about it...He and God and Jesus were all 'gay bashers.' What if she'd fallen in love with her cocker spaniel? Is that an alternative lifestyle? (By the way, the Bible speaks against that, too.)

FALL COLORS 2000:
THE STATE OF DIVERSITY IN BROADCAST NETWORK PRIME TIME TELEVISION

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FALL COLORS 2000: THE STATE OF DIVERSITY IN BROADCAST NETWORK PRIME TIME TELEVISION

INTRODUCTION[1]

The 1999-2000 prime time TV season became the subject of considerable controversy after NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, in a July 1999 speech, described the new fall season as a "virtual whitewash" and threatened a boycott of network television. Mfume called the 1999-2000 season "a shameful display by network executives, who are either clueless, careless, or both."[2] Studies of network programming from that season confirmed comments of critics like Mfume that prime time network programming was overwhelmingly a white world, with people of color appearing in mostly secondary and guest roles. One study discovered that eighty percent of characters appearing on prime time network entertainment were white, African Americans made a visible presence (13% of characters), and characters from other racial groups were virtually nonexistent (Heintz-Knowles, 2000). The Fall 1999 season then, was the continuation of a trend, topping off, "a steady decline in the percentage of ethnic minorities on prime time" since the beginning of the 1990.[3]

Mfume's concern of television's "whitewash" is not a new one. The pattern of under and misrepresentation of minority groups during prime time is not simply a problem of the 1990s. It has persisted in varying forms since the beginning of television. MacDonald's, *Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television Since 1948*, describes the stereotypes, limited roles and attempts at assimilation on prime time television during its first forty years.[4] Baughman explains that blacks were "rarely seen" on network programming until the mid-1960s" when shows such as *I Spy* and *Julia* appeared.[5]

Not only do people of color appear infrequently on prime time television, researchers have also found these limited portrayals to be inaccurate, derived primarily from a white perspective. Gates contends there is little commonality between "the social status of Black Americans and the fabricated images of black people Americans consume everyday."[6] Gray explains, "Whiteness is the privileged yet unnamed place from which to see and make sense of the world…blackness simply works to reaffirm, shore up and police the cultural and moral boundaries of the existing social order."[7]

Researchers have long contended that messages from entertainment fare become part of our belief systems about the world around us. Television is a socializing force, a "common storyteller" that prescribes what is "normal" and what is outside of the mainstream.[8] As Hall explains, television images are significant as they produce and perpetuate a social ideology, one that becomes our "taken for granted…world of common sense."[9] The lack of realistic portrayals on television, then, can have a substantially negative effect on all

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[1] This research was funded by a grant to the first author by Children Now, Oakland, CA.
[2] Aucoin, Don. "TV Networks Under Fire For Diversity Gap," *The Boston Globe*, A1.
[3] Aucoin, Don. "TV Networks Under Fire For Diversity Gap," *The Boston Globe*, A1.
[4] MacDonald, J. Fred. *Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television Since 1948*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1992).
[5] Baughman, James L. *The Republic of Mass Culture*, 2nd Ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997): 109.
[6] Gates, Jr., Henry Louis. "TV's Black World Turns – but Stays Unreal," in *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*, Margaret L. Anderson and Patrician Hill Collins, Eds. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1992): 316.
[7] Gray, Herman. *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness."* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 71, 86-87.
[8] Signorelli, Nancy and Bacue, Aaron. Recognition and Respect: A Content Analysis of Prime-Time Television Characters Across Three Decades. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 40 (1999): 527-544.
[9] Hall, Stuart. "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media." In Gail Dines and Jean Humez, Eds, *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995): 18-22.

viewers in a multicultural society as television "amplifies real-life stereotypes."[10] As Gordon notes, "the most well-adjusted people are those who have some realistic perspective about what other groups are like." It is also "important for people to see others like themselves on TV. It validates you."[11] As "black viewers are heavy consumers of all television,"[12] watching "50 percent more television than any other group,"[13] the absence of realistic black characters on TV is even more troubling.

In response to pressure from the NAACP, network executives promised to increase the racial diversity in program casts and on writing staffs as early as the 2000-2001 season. According to an article in the October 2000 issue of Ebony, "there is more color in TV land this fall" but Mfume contends that it's "not enough...While there is more diversity in the [upcoming] fall TV season, we still really have a long, long way to go."[14]

Yvette Lee Bowser, executive producer and creator of WB's *For Your Love*, says the portrayals of African Americans on TV are getting worse in the Fall 2000 season, not better: "We are taking giant steps backward because [Black] images are limited and regurgitated."[15] Fredrick L. McKissak Jr., agrees with Bowser noting, "Blacks are increasingly pigeonholed in simpleminded comedies."[16]

With these contradictory assessments of the most recent television season in hand, this study set out to determine the current state of diversity on prime time broadcast network television by examining the following research questions:

1. Does level of racial diversity vary by genre?
2. Does level of racial diversity vary by network?
3. Does level of racial diversity vary by time program airs?
4. Does level of racial diversity vary by gender?
5. Does the level of racial diversity vary by occupation?

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the first two episodes of each prime time entertainment series airing in Fall 2000 on the six broadcast networks. "Entertainment series" was defined as fictional programming in a serial format. The sample did not include sports programming, news magazines, game shows, made-for-TV movies or specials. Programs in the sample aired between 8 – 11 p.m. PST Monday through Saturday and 7 – 11p.m. PST Sunday. Programs were recorded between September 4 and November 12, 2000 by the two authors. Since this project focused on 2000 series programming, only first run episodes were recorded.

All content was subjected to two levels of analysis:

- Macro-level analysis which examined the following program characteristics:
  1. Genre: defined as *situation comedy, drama* (other than science fiction), *science fiction, variety*, and *other*. In cases where programs could be identified as more than one type of program (i.e. NBC's *Ed* and Fox's *Ally McBeal* are comedy-drama hybrids), coders referred to network promotional material to decide how to code for genre.

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[10] Renn, Jennifer A. and Calvert, Sandra L. "The Relation Between Gender Schemas and Adults' Recall of Stereotyped and Counterstereotyped Television Information." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 28 (1999): 449-53.

[11] Brand-Willimas and Tiska, *Detroit News*, July 13, 1999.

[12] Matabane, Paula W. "Television and the Black Audience: Cultivating Moderate Perspectives on Racial Integration. *Journal of Communication*, 38 (1988): 21-31.

[13] McKissack, Jr. Fredrick L. "The Problem with Black T.V.," *The Progressive*, February 1997: 39.

[14] Hughes, Zondra. The New TV Season: "What's New, What's Black, What's Back," *Ebony*, October 2000.

[15] Hughes, Zondra. The New TV Season: "What's New, What's Black, What's Back," *Ebony*, October 2000.

[16] McKissack, Jr. Fredrick L. "The Problem with Black T.V.," *The Progressive*, February 1997: 38.

2. Network
3. Time program starts
4. Program length
5. Format: defined as *live action, animated, claymation*, or some combination of live action and animation/puppets
6. Age-Based Rating: TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14/TV-M: as determined by networks and presented on screen in the beginning of each program
7. Content Rating: V (violence), D (suggestive dialog), S (sex), L (harsh language): as determined by networks and presented on screen in the beginning of each program

- Micro-level analysis which identified each speaking character and examined the following characteristics:
  Character Role: defined as *primary recurring* if character appears in opening credit sequence and is integral to the plot; *secondary recurring* if character does not appear in opening credit sequence but appears regularly and contributes to the plot; *primary non-recurring* if character does not appear regularly but is vital to one episode or plot; *secondary non-recurring* if character does not appear regularly but plays a supporting role in one episode; *tertiary* if character does not appear regularly and speaks but does not move the plot.
  Age: defined as *child* (pre-pubescent); *adolescent* (approx. 13-18); *young adult* (approx. 19-29); *adult* (approx. 30-39); *settled adult* (approx. 40-49); *older adult* (approx. 50-69); *elderly* (over 70). Social/life experiences were used to help determine approximate age for most adult characters. For example, a character who is established in his/her career and has a young family was identified as an "adult" while a character who is shown just starting out in a career was identified as a "young adult."
  Gender: for non-human characters (i.e. aliens, borgs), physical markers, clothing, and/or verbal identification was used for coding purposes
  Race: defined as *White/Caucasian; African American; Asian Pacific American; Native American; Latino/Hispanic; Multiracial* (if specific information given); *Apparent racial minority* (if race was unidentifiable); *Other* as determined primarily by physical features such as skin color, hair type, and eye shape and secondarily by character name and verbal identification. Note: race refers to *character's* race, and not *actor's* race
  Marital Status: defined as *single/apparently never married; currently married; separated or divorced; widowed* as determined through observation and verbal identification. Characters identified as children or adolescents were not coded for marital status, nor were they included in analysis of this data.
  Parental Status: defined by clear depiction of parental responsibility for dependent children
  Occupation: identified from observation or verbal identification using an exhaustive set of categories developed by the authors in previous studies of prime time characters.
  Disabled: defined as character being clearly shown as exhibiting a chronic disability (physical or mental)

All content was coded by the authors and one other trained coder. To ensure reliability among coders, ten percent of the sample was coded by each of the coders independently. The percent of agreement between coders was calculated. All variables included in this analysis received a level of agreement of at least 96%.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Character Role Type

All characters with speaking roles were included for analysis in this study. However, all speaking roles are not created equal. To determine if there are differences in the ways characters of different racial groups contribute to the story lines of the sample episodes, each character was classified according to his/her importance to the plot and frequency of occurrence. The following *character role types* describe the contributions of different characters to the story lines of program episodes:

- *Primary Recurring*: Actor appears in opening cast credits, is involved in the primary story line of most episodes.
- *Primary Non-Recurring*: Actor does not appear in opening cast credits, is a guest star involved in the primary story line of one or two episodes (clearly identified as a non-recurring character)
- *Secondary Recurring*: Actor does not appear in opening cast credits but appears regularly on the series and contributes to story line development
- *Secondary Non-Recurring*: Actor does not appear in opening cast credits but plays a supporting guest role
- *Tertiary*: Character with minor speaking part who does not affect the outcome of the story line.

For example, on the NBC hit, *Law and Order,* the characters may be defined as:

Character Role Type	Actor	Character	Description
Primary Recurring	Jesse L. Martin	Ed Greene	One of two primary detectives; appears in opening credits cast.
Primary Non-Recurring	Megan Follows	Megan Parnell	Mother accused of murdering her disabled son; guest stars in one episode
Secondary Recurring	J.K. Simmons	Dr. Emil Skoda	Psychiatrist who appears regularly to consult on defendants' mental health. Appears in secondary credits.
Secondary Non-Recurring	Brian Delate	Colin Parnell	Husband of accused murderer; plays secondary role in one episode
Tertiary	Rita Gardner	Jury Foreperson	One line reading the verdict.

Program Character Set

The *Character Role Types* allow us to examine the level of diversity in different subgroups in the sample. For this report, analyses will be conducted on the following *Program Character Sets*:

- *Entire Cast of Characters*: Includes all the speaking characters appearing in the two episodes examined
- *Plot-Relevant Characters Only*: Includes primary and secondary characters only; excludes characters identified as *tertiary* who did not contribute to the development of the story line
- *Recurring Characters Only*: Includes all primary and secondary characters who have recurring roles
- *Primary Recurring Characters Only or Opening Credits Cast*: Includes the main characters who appear in the programs' opening credits sequences

Program Diversity Index

In addition to looking for diversity across the sample as a whole, this study aims to assess the level of diversity within individual programs. Each program in the sample was evaluated and labeled for Program Diversity according to the following definitions:

- *All White*: All Characters in the program character set identified racially as "white"
- *All Black*: All Characters in the program character set identified racially as "African American"
- *Only 1*: All characters in the program character set but one identified as belonging to the same racial group
- *Mixed*: Program character set includes a mix of racial and ethnic characters that is not all white, all black, or Only 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

This method of data collection yielded 2251 characters across 176 episodes of 88 different programs. Table 1 shows the number of male and female characters in the entire sample. A list of the programs sampled is included in Appendix A.

TABLE 1
GENDER OF CHARACTER

Gender	Total Sample (n=2251)		Primary Recurring Characters (n=564)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	1462	65	325	58
Female	789	35	239	42
Total	2251	100	564	100

The following tables show the distribution of programs by network and genre. CBS and NBC aired the largest number of programs in the sample and featured the largest number of characters. The smallest number of programs and characters came from the UPN network.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF PROGRAMS AND CHARACTERS BY NETWORK

Network	Number of Programs	Number of Characters
ABC	12	227
CBS	18	541
NBC	19	574
FOX	13	341
WB	17	365
UPN	9	203
Total	88	2251

Nearly half of the programs in the sample were situation comedies, yet the majority of characters appeared in dramatic programs. This discrepancy is due to the substantially larger casts in most dramas than situation comedies.

TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF CHARACTERS BY GENRE

Genre	Number of Programs	Number of Characters
Situation comedy	43	757
Drama	38	1347
Science Fiction	5	125
Variety	2	22
Total	88	2251

A majority of characters in the sample played non-recurring roles. The most frequently occurring type was *tertiary*.

TABLE 4
FREQUENCY OF CHARACTER ROLE TYPES

Character Role Type	Frequency	Percent of total sample
Primary Recurring	564	25
Primary Non-Recurring	178	8
Secondary Recurring	338	15
Secondary Non-Recurring	359	16
Tertiary	812	36
Total	2251	100

RESULTS

The world of prime time entertainment television is overwhelmingly populated by white adults and children.

As Table 4 indicates, three-fourths of the characters in the sample (n=1687) are white. African Americans make up roughly 17% of the sample (n=383). Less than one percent of characters were Native American (n=5, 0.2%). This picture does not change when examining the race of primary recurring characters only.

TABLE 5
RACE OF CHARACTER

Race	Total Sample (n=2251)		Primary Recurring Characters Only (n=564)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
White	1688	75	431	76
African American	383	17	103	18
Asian/Pacific Islander	61	3	11	2
Native American	5	0.2	1	0.2
Latino, Hispanic	47	2	9	2
Other	44	2	5	1
Don't know/Can't tell	23	1	4	1
Total	2251	100	564	100

NETWORKS

Racial diversity is not equivalent across the six networks.

When examining diversity of all characters in the sample, UPN had the highest proportion of nonwhite characters (41%) while ABC had the lowest (17%). The racial picture changes only slightly when examining all recurring characters or primary recurring characters only. UPN programs still feature the most nonwhite characters (approx. 40%). The most interesting change occurs on CBS when non-recurring characters are excluded from the analysis. The proportion of African American characters on that network jumps from 16% of the overall character composition to 25% of the primary recurring character composition.

TABLE 6
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF ALL CHARACTERS BY NETWORK (N=2251)
(percent of each network's population)

Network	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Latino/ Hispanic	Other*
ABC	83%	13%	2%	0.4%	1%	0.4%
CBS	76%	16%	2%	0.2%	4%	1%
NBC	79%	14%	3%	-	2%	2%
Fox	73%	13%	3%	1%	3%	8%
WB	72%	20%	2%	-	1%	5%
UPN	59%	33%	5%	0.5%	0.5%	3%

*includes non-humans with ambiguous race

TABLE 7
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF RECURRING CHARACTERS BY NETWORK (N=903)
(percent of each network's population)

Network	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Latino/ Hispanic	Other*
ABC	81%	14%	1%	-	3%	1%
CBS	71%	26%	1%	-	3%	1%
NBC	80%	13%	4%	-	2%	0.5%
Fox	81%	11%	3%	1%	1%	4%
WB	76%	20%	2%	-	2%	1%
UPN	62%	32%	4%	-	-	2%

*includes non-humans with ambiguous race

TABLE 8
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF PRIMARY RECURRING CHARACTERS BY NETWORK (N=564)
(percent of each network's population)

Network	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Latino/ Hispanic	Other*
ABC	83%	11%	-	-	5%	2%
CBS	71%	25%	-	-	3%	1%
NBC	83%	12%	3%	-	2%	-
Fox	82%	10%	4%	-	1%	4%
WB	78%	19%	1%	-	-	2%
UPN	59%	35%	4%	-	-	3%

*includes non-humans with ambiguous race

In addition to overall racial diversity on prime time, this study examined the racial diversity within each program. Each program was assigned a rating on the *Program Diversity Index* (see page 3 for definitions) based on the racial make up of the cast of characters appearing across the two episodes. Each program received four ratings, based on the *Character Set* (see page 3 for definitions) examined.

Diversity in network prime time entertainment most often comes from the inclusion of non-recurring characters.

When examining all of the characters in the sample, a vast majority of programs were identified as having *mixed* casts. 72 of the 88 programs contain mixed casts when all speaking characters are included. However, that number drops dramatically when tertiary (non-plot relevant) characters are excluded.

By honing in further on central characters, the number of programs with mixed casts drops to 25 when examining opening credits casts only. Over 40% of the programs (n= 38) have opening credits casts that are either all- white or all- black.

TABLE 9
PROGRAM DIVERSITY INDEX FOR OVERALL PRIME TIME

PDI Rating	Total Cast	Primary and Secondary Characters Only (Plot Relevant)	Recurring Characters Only	Opening Credits Cast Only
Mixed	72	54	42	25
Only 1	10	16	24	25
All White	6	16	19	33
All Black	-	2	3	5
Total Programs	88	88	88	88

When examining the total cast of characters, there is not much difference between the networks in the level of diversity in individual programs. At least three-fourths of the programs on each network were identified as *mixed* when total casts were examined. However, as we look at the diversity of central characters, some differences between the networks emerge. Eliminating tertiary characters alone reduces the diversity of casts significantly on two networks – ABC and the WB. While 75% of ABC programs and 72% of WB programs were identified as *mixed* when looking at entire casts, this percentage drops to less than half for each network when tertiary characters are not included (ABC = 5 of 12 programs; WB= 8 of 17 programs).

Focusing further on central characters, we see a decrease in the number of programs on all networks with *mixed* casts and an increase in the number of programs with *all white* and *all black* casts. Again, ABC and the WB feature the fewest programs with *mixed* casts. Just two programs on ABC (17%) and three programs on the WB (18%) were classified as *mixed* when the analysis included just the opening credits casts. Half of the programs on ABC (n=6) and 53% of the programs on the WB (n=9) were identified as having racially homogeneous opening credits casts. The UPN network featured the highest proportion of programs with *mixed* opening credits casts (n=4 of 9, 44% of UPN programs).

TABLE 10
PROGRAM DIVERSITY INDEX BY NETWORK

Network	Mixed	Only 1	All White	All Black	Total
ABC					
Total Cast	9	2	1	-	12
Plot-Relevant	5	3	4	-	12
Recur Only	4	4	4	-	12
Opening Credit	2	4	6	-	12
CBS					
Total Cast	16	1	1	-	18
Plot Relevant	14	-	4	-	18
Recur Only	9	5	4	-	18
Opening Credit	7	5	6	-	18
NBC					
Total Cast	16	1	2	-	19
Plot Relevant	12	3	4	-	19
Recur Only	10	5	4	-	19
Opening Credit	5	7	7	-	19
FOX					
Total Cast	11	1	1	-	13
Plot Relevant	9	2	2	-	13
Recur Only	7	4	2	-	13
Opening Credit	5	2	6	-	13
WB					
Total Cast	13	4	-	-	17
Plot Relevant	8	6	2	1	17
Recur Only	6	6	4	1	17
Opening Credit	3	4	5	3	17
UPN					
Total Cast	7	2	-	-	9
Plot Relevant	6	2	-	1	9
Recur Only	5	2	-	2	9
Opening Credit	4	3	-	2	9

GENRE

With the exception of Native American characters, the majority of characters from each racial group appear in dramatic programs when the entire cast is analyzed. When we hone in on central characters only, the picture changes somewhat. If we consider science fiction programming (i.e. *Star Trek: Voyager*, UPN; *Dark Angel*, Fox) to be dramatic in nature, then the majority of primary recurring characters from each racial group *except African American* appear in dramatic programming. African American characters appeared with equal frequency in dramatic and comedy programming. Primary recurring characters from all other minority racial groups are far more likely to appear in dramatic programs than comedies.

TABLE 11
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF ALL CHARACTERS BY GENRE (N=2251)
(percent of each racial group)

Genre	White (n=1687)	African American (n=383)	Asian/Pacific Islander (n=61)	Native American (n=5)	Latino/ Hispanic (n=47)
Situation Comedy	32%	41%	26%	60%	28%
Drama	61%	55%	64%	20%	72%
Science Fiction	6%	4%	10%	20%	-
Variety	1%	1%	-	-	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 12
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF RECURRING CHARACTERS BY GENRE (N=903)
(percent of each racial group)

Genre	White (n=685)	African American (n=166)	Asian/Pacific Islander (n=21)	Native American (n=2)	Latino/ Hispanic (n=16)
Situation Comedy	39%	42%	29%	50%	25%
Drama	53%	54%	57%	-	75%
Science Fiction	6%	2%	14%	50%	-
Variety	2%	2%	-	-	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 13
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF PRIMARY RECURRING CHARACTERS BY GENRE (N=564)
(percent of each racial group)

Genre	White (n=431)	African American (n=103)	Asian/Pacific Islander (n=11)	Native American (n=1)	Latino/ Hispanic (n=9)
Situation Comedy	40%	48%	27%		22%
Drama	53%	49%	46%		78%
Science Fiction	5%	1%	27%	100%	-
Variety	2%	3%	-		-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

There is a great disparity in levels of diversity for programs of different genres. Dramas are more than three times as likely as situation comedies to feature *mixed* primary casts (45% of dramas vs.14% of situation comedies). When examining total casts, all but one of the dramas were identified as *mixed* (n=37, 97%) while 70% of the situation comedies were so identified (n=30).

For nearly 40% of the situation comedies (n=16, 37%), the story lines were moved entirely by characters of the same racial group (n=14 programs identified as *all white* and 2 programs identified as *all black*). For 10 of these programs (63%), characters of a different racial group appeared only in tertiary roles, often with just one line. Nearly two-thirds of the situation comedies (n=28, 65%) feature opening credits casts that are racially homogeneous. Fourteen percent of the situation comedies (n=6) did not contain a single character of color in a speaking role in either of the episodes examined.

Four out of five of the science fiction programs were identified as *mixed* when examining the total cast of characters, but this number dropped to just 1 in 5 (*Star Trek: Voyager*, UPN) when examining *opening credit casts only*. The two variety programs in the sample were split between having a *mixed* cast (*Hype*, Fox) and a cast with only one racial minority character (*Whose Line is it Anyway?*, ABC).

TABLE 14
PROGRAM DIVERSITY INDEX BY GENRE

Genre	Mixed	Only 1	All White	All Black	Total
SitCom					
Total Cast	30	7	6	-	43
Plot-Relevant	17	10	14	2	43
Recur Only	14	10	16	3	43
Opening Credit	6	9	23	5	43
Drama					
Total Cast	37	1	-	-	38
Plot Relevant	32	5	1	-	38
Recur Only	25	11	2	-	38
Opening Credit	17	13	8	-	38
Sci Fi					
Total Cast	4	1	-	-	5
Plot Relevant	4	-	1	-	5
Recur Only	2	2	1	-	5
Opening Credit	1	2	2	-	5
Variety					
Total Cast	1	1	-	-	2
Plot Relevant	1	1	-	-	2
Recur Only	1	1	-	-	2
Opening Credit	1	1	-	-	2

PROGRAM AIR TIME

Another way to assess diversity is to look at all programs across the TV dial at the same hour. We can ask the question: how diverse is the world pictured on prime time network entertainment from 8-9pm? 9-10pm? When we examine program diversity by program hour, an interesting pattern emerges.

Program diversity dramatically increases as the evening goes on. While 73% (n=29) of the programs on during the 8 o'clock hour are defined as *mixed* when considering the total cast, just 13% of those programs (n=5) are so classified when just opening credit casts are included in the analysis. Indeed, over half of all programs airing in the 8 o'clock hour (n=22, 55%) were classified as either *all white* or *all black* when just opening credit casts were analyzed.

The picture becomes slightly more diverse during the 9 o'clock hour, with 85% of programs (n=27) identified as *mixed* when considering the total cast, and nearly one-third of the programs (n=10, 31%) classified as such when examining exclusively the opening credit casts. Still, at this hour, more programs featured opening credit casts that were either *all-white* or *all-black* (n=13, 41%) than racially mixed.

The 10 o'clock hour is the most diverse time on prime time entertainment. Every program analyzed at this hour was classified as mixed when examining both *total cast* and *plot relevant characters only*. When the analysis was narrowed to *recurring characters* and *opening credit cast* only, the level of diversity dropped slightly. However, at this hour, two-thirds of the programs (n=8, 67%) were identified as having *mixed opening credit casts*.

The few programs that aired during the 7 o'clock hour on Sundays were all classified as *mixed* when examining total casts and were evenly split between *mixed* and *homogeneous* (either *all white* or *all black*) when examining just opening credit casts.

TABLE 15
PROGRAM DIVERSITY INDEX BY TIME PROGRAM AIRS

Program Air Time	Mixed	Only 1	All White	All Black	Total
7-8pm					
Total Cast	4	-	-	-	4
Plot-Relevant	3	-	-	1	4
Recur Only	2	-	1	1	4
Opening Credit	2	-	1	1	4
8-9pm					
Total Cast	29	8	3	-	40
Plot Relevant	19	12	9	-	40
Recur Only	14	14	11	1	40
Opening Credit	5	13	19	3	40
9-10pm					
Total Cast	28	1	3	-	32
Plot Relevant	20	5	6	1	32
Recur Only	15	9	7	1	32
Opening Credit	10	10	11	1	32
10-11pm					
Total Cast	12	-	-	-	12
Plot Relevant	12	-	-	-	12
Recur Only	10	2	-	-	12
Opening Credit	8	3	1	-	12

GENDER

Consistent with most studies of television content, this sample consisted of more male than female characters (see Table 1). The racial diversity of the sample of female characters reflects the diversity in the total sample.

TABLE 16
RACE OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

Race	Frequency	Percent
White	584	74
African American	145	18
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	3
Native American	-	0.1
Latina/Hispanic	18	2
Other	15	2
Don't Know	2	0.3
Total	789	100

Female characters are slightly more likely to be included in guest or tertiary roles than in recurring roles. However, female recurring characters are almost twice as likely to play primary roles.

TABLE 17
ROLE TYPE OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

Role Type	Frequency	Percent
Primary Recurring	239	30
Primary Non-Recurring	63	8
Secondary Recurring	133	17
Secondary Non-Recurring	117	15
Tertiary	237	30
Total	789	100

If we compare the role types of males and females of different races, we see that females of all races are more likely than males to play *recurring* roles. This difference is greatest for Asian/Pacific Islander characters. More than half of the female Asian characters played recurring roles, while less than a quarter of male Asian characters did. Male Asian characters were overwhelmingly more likely to be included in tertiary roles than in any other role type. Latina recurring characters were more likely to play secondary roles than primary roles. Female recurring characters of all other races were more likely to play primary roles than secondary.

TABLE 18
RACE AND ROLE TYPE OF FEMALE CHARACTERS (N=789)
(percent of each racial group)

Race	Role Type				
	Primary Recurring	Primary Non-Recurring	Secondary Recurring	Secondary Non-Recurring	Tertiary
White (n=584)	31	8	16	16	30
African American (n=145)	31	9	20	13	27
Asian/Pacific American (n=25)	32	4	24	4	36
Latina(n=18)	17	17	21	12	33
Other/Don't Know (n=10)	12	6	6	18	59

TABLE 19
RACE AND ROLE TYPE OF MALE CHARACTERS (n=1462)
(percent of each racial group)

Race	Role Type				
	Primary Recurring	Primary Non-Recurring	Secondary Recurring	Secondary Non-Recurring	Tertiary
White (n=1104)	23	8	15	17	38
African American (n=238)	24	7	14	15	40
Asian/Pacific American (n=36)	8	11	11	14	56
Native American (n=5)	-	40	-	20	20
Latino (n=29)	21	7	10	21	41
Other/Don't Know (n=50)	14	8	6	26	46

OCCUPATIONS

Television adults tend to engage in professional careers with a good deal of freedom.
TV adults were most often employed as professionals (i.e. architects, stock brokers, computer analysts). Among the top ten occupations of TV adults[17] were entertainer/performer/artist, physician, and small business owner. Nine percent of the TV adult population was employed in law enforcement at all levels (from beat cop to detective to chief of police) and eight percent were attorneys. Table 23 shows the top occupations for the adult characters in the sample.

TABLE 20
TOP OCCUPATIONS FOR TV ADULTS WITH IDENTIFIABLE OCCUPATIONS (N=1659)

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Professional	168	10
Law Enforcement	147	9
Attorney	127	8
Service, Retail, Restaurant	129	8
Physician	92	6
Entertainer/Performer/Artist	102	6
Criminal	75	5
Student	67	4
Small Business Owner/Manager	66	4
Clerical	62	4

White characters were more likely than African American characters to be shown in professional occupations, and African Americans were shown more often than whites in law enforcement occupations. Both whites and African Americans appeared with about equal frequency as physicians, attorneys, and in service/retail/restaurant jobs.

The top 10 occupations for female characters showed a mix of both traditionally female occupations and non-traditional occupations. Females in the sample were shown working as professionals, attorneys, and physicians with about equal frequency as they were shown working as nurses, secretaries, homemakers, and teachers.

[17] For seventeen percent of the adult population, occupation was unidentifiable.

TABLE 21
TOP OCCUPATIONS FOR TV ADULTS BY RACE AND GENDER (n=1659)

All White Adults (n=1497)	All African American Adults (n=347)	All Male Adults (n=1289)	All Female Adults (687)
Professional (9%)	Law Enforcement (11%)	Professional (9%)	Professional (7%)
Attorney (7%)	Service (7%)	Attorney (7%)	Attorney (6%)
Law Enforcement (7%)	Attorney (6%)	Service (6%)	Nurse/Physician's Assistant (6%)
Entertainer (6%)	Physician (6%)	Physician (5%)	Service (6%)
Service (6%)	Nurse/Physician's Asst. (6%)	Entertainer (5%)	Clerical (6%)
Criminal (4%)	Student (5%)	Criminal (5%)	Homemaker (5%)
Physician (4%)	Professional (5%)	Manager/Small Business Owner (4%)	Entertainer (5%)
Executive/CEO (3%)	Clerical (4%)	Executive/CEO (3%)	Student (5%)
Journalist/Media Professional (3%)	Manager/Small Business Owner (4%)	Military (3%)	Physician (4%)
Clerical (3%)	Teacher (3%)	Craftsman (3%)	Journalist/Media Professional (4%)
Manager/Small Business Owner (3%)	Entertainer (3%)	Security (3%)	Teacher (4%)
	Paramedic/Fire Fighter (3%)		
	Security (3%)		

To assess the relative importance of characters appearing in different occupational categories, the data were analyzed by *Character Role Type*. This allows us to see if there is a difference in the occupations shown for primary and secondary, recurring and non-recurring characters.

White recurring characters most frequently cast appeared as business professionals, while African American recurring characters were most frequently shown working in health care or law enforcement. Primarily due to the introduction of two new hospital series (*City of Angels (CBS), Gideon's Crossing (ABC)*), the most common occupations for African American recurring adult characters were physicians and their assistants. The second most common occupation was in law enforcement at all levels, from patrol cop to undercover officer to detective to chief of detectives.

The few Asian and Latino recurring characters were shown in a variety of occupations from high status careers like physician and attorney to lower status positions as domestic servants, secretaries, or homemakers. Tables 26 through 29 show the top occupations for male and female adult characters of each racial group by role type.

TABLE 22
TOP 5 OCCUPATION S FOR WHITE ADULTS (N= 1497)

Primary Recurring (n=371)	Primary Non-Recurring (n=118)	Secondary Recurring (n=215)	Secondary Non-Recurring (n=250)	Tertiary (n=543)
Professional (13%)	Criminal (18%)	Professional (14%)	Attorney (13%)	Service (8%)
Attorney (9%)	Executive/CEO (10%)	Clerical (8%)	Criminal (7%)	Professional (7%)
Professional Wrestler (7%)	Professional (9%)	Student (6%)	Professional (6%)	Entertainer (7%)
Law Enforcement (7%)	Law Enforcement (6%)	Service (6%)	Law Enforcement (6%)	Law Enforcement (7%)
Entertainer (6%)	Attorney (5%)	Physician (5%)	Service (6%)	Attorney (5%)

TABLE 23
TOP 5 OCCUPATION S FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN ADULTS (N= 347)

Primary Recurring (n=97)	Primary Non-Recurring (n=25)	Secondary Recurring(n=55)	Secondary Non-Recurring (n=48)	Tertiary (n=122)
Physician (12%)	Attorney (12%)	Nurse/Physician's Assistant (16%)	Law Enforcement (17%)	Nurse/Physician's Assistant (15%)
Law Enforcement (10%)	Criminal (12%)	Law Enforcement (9%)	Service (12%)	Law Enforcement (13%)
Student (9%)	Professional (8%)	Physician (7%)	Attorney (10%)	Service (7%)
Professional (8%)	Service (8%)	Student (7%)	Nurse/Physician's Assistant (6%)	Paramedic/Fire Fighter (6%)
Attorney (7%)	Military (4%)	Service (7%)	Student (4%)	Entertainer (5%)
Teacher (7%)	Retired (4%)	Clerical (7%)	Criminal (4%)	
			Security (4%)	

TABLE 24
TOP 5 OCCUPATION S FOR ASIAN/PACIFIC AMERICAN ADULTS (N= 55)

Primary Recurring (n=9)	Primary Non-Recurring (n=5)	Secondary Recurring(n=7)	Secondary Non-Recurring(n=6)	Tertiary(n=28)
Professional (n=3)	Manager/Small Business Owner (n=1)	Physician (n=1)	Service (n=2)	Service (n=5)
Attorney (n=1)	Entertainer (n=1)	Nurse/Physician's Assistant (n=1)	Professional (n=1)	Law Enforcement (n=4)
Physician (n=1)	Criminal (n=1)	Military (n=1)	Security (n=1)	Physician (n=3)
Service (n=1)		Clerical (n=1)	Law Enforcement (n=1)	Teacher (n=2)
Student (n=1)		Domestic Servant (n=1)		Student (n=2)
Homemaker (n=1)		Student (n=1)		Criminal (n=2)
		Homemaker (n=1)		

TABLE 25
TOP 5 OCCUPATION S FOR LATINO ADULTS (N= 43)

Primary Recurring (n=8)	Primary Non-Recurring (n=4)	Secondary Recurring(n=6)	Secondary Non-Recurring(n=9)	Tertiary(n=16)
Law Enforcement (n=2)	Criminal (n=1)	Physician (n=1)	Criminal (n=2)	Service (n=3)
Paramedic/Fire Fighter (n=1)	Unskilled Laborer (n=1)	Manager/Small Business Owner (n=1)	Service (n=2)	Entertainer (n=2)
Professional (n=1)		Nurse/Physician's Assistant (n=1)	Nurse/Physician's Assistant (n=1)	Security (n=1)
Physician (n=1)		Clerical (n=1)	Law Enforcement (n=1)	Journalist/Media Professional (n=1)
Executive/CEO (n=1)		Domestic Servant (n=1)	Unskilled Laborer (n=1)	Law Enforcement (n=1)
Clerical (n=1)				Domestic Servant (n=1)
				Unskilled Laborer (n=1)
				Student (n=1)

THE STATE OF DIVERSITY ON PRIME TIME BROADCAST TELEVISION

Prime time broadcast television does not reflect the diversity that is apparent in the world outside the screen. There are fewer Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans than in the general population, especially among the child characters. The world of prime time network entertainment is primarily a white world. Whites made up ¾ of the sample population. African Americans were a visible presence, but all other racial minority groups were virtually invisible. These proportions remained nearly the same when examining female and youth subpopulations.

When programming does include people of color, it frequently does so in an exclusionary manner. The Program Diversity Index – measuring the level of diversity within individual programs – showed that most programs feature primary casts that are either all-white or all-black. There was a striking reduction in programs labeled *mixed* as we honed in on the central characters in the programs. Eighty-two percent of programs (n=72) were identified as *mixed* when examining total casts. However, that number drops substantially when we examine plot-relevant characters only - fifty-four programs, just 61% of the sample were identified as *mixed* when tertiary characters were eliminated from the analysis. And looking at opening credits casts only, the Program Diversity Index identified just 28% (n=25) of the programs as having *mixed* casts. By contrast, over 40% (n=38) of the programs were identified as having opening credits casts that were either *all white* or *all black*. The racial diversity in prime time, then, comes in the form of secondary and guest characters.

Network

All major television networks present more images of whites than people of color in their prime time programming. Some networks, however, are doing a much better job of providing audiences with diverse character roles in their shows. UPN's prime time programming contained the greatest percentage of people of color in primary recurring roles. More than 40% of the primary recurring roles on that network were written for people of color, with 35% going to African Americans. ABC and NBC provided the least diverse programming during prime time when examining primary recurring characters. Each of these two networks presented shows where 83% of the primary recurring casts were white. The Fox Network did not

fare much better, with whites comprising 82% of primary recurring characters in their prime time programming

UPN also leads the field in racial diversity when all characters are considered, maintaining a 41% people of color ratio. When all character roles are included in analysis, Fox improves character diversity, increasing the percentage of people of color from 18% to 27%. ABC and NBC, however, make little progress, with ABC remaining 83% white and NBC improving only slightly.

Genre
Racial diversity is found most often in dramatic programming during prime time. A subset of this the drama genre, science fiction, has the greatest level of program diversity in the study. Situation comedies are more likely to feature all-white or all-black casts. Prime time comedies are nearly three times more likely than dramas to have a completely homogenous cast. African Americans were featured more frequently in situation comedy programs than any other racial group. Actors from this racial group appeared with equal frequency in dramatic and comedy programs, while actors from all other racial groups appeared with greater frequency in dramatic programming.

Program Time
Racial diversity is concentrated in late-evening programs. Therefore, children and viewers of early evening programming are most likely to see programs with all-white casts. Almost one-half (48%) of all programs aired at 8:00 EST have white-only primary recurring casts. An additional 33% of shows during this time period contained only one person of color in the recurring cast.

Gender
Across all prime time programming, women comprise only 35% of the population. There are half as many white women as white men on prime time, a striking 2:1 ratio. Women of color also lag behind men in prime time appearances with men comprising about 60% of all roles that feature people of color. Of the 2251 roles on prime time last season, only 198 (8.8%) were written for women of color. Even more disconcerting, no Native American women appeared during the Fall 2000 prime time season.

Occupation
Primary recurring characters of color generally are employed in high income/high status jobs such as physician, attorney or other professional. When secondary and non-recurring characters of color are considered, however, stereotypes emerge. Of the top five occupations for all racial groups, only people of color filled roles of domestic worker, homemaker, nurse/physician's assistant and unskilled laborer. Whites, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly cast in high status and professional occupations whether recurring, non-recurring, primary or secondary.

WHY THE STATE OF DIVERSITY ON PRIME TIME BROADCAST TELEVISION MATTERS

Through patterns of inclusion and exclusion, television content sends implicit messages about the relative cultural importance of different groups, behaviors, and ideologies.[18] Under representation and negative portrayals of different groups on TV can influence the self-concepts and images of viewers from these groups. These portrayals can influence the attitudes and beliefs about such groups among members of the general public. Even when viewers recognize that the content they are viewing is fictional, its messages and images gradually shape expectations and beliefs about the real world.[19]

Since children are more likely to watch television in the earlier hours, then the type of world presented to them on network prime time entertainment is a very homogenous one. The central characters who reappear

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[18] Clark, C. (1972. Race, identification, and television violence (pp. 120-184). In G.A. Comstock, E.A. Rubinstein, & J.P. Murray (Eds.) Television and Social Behavior (vol. 5): Television 's Effects: Further Explorations. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
[19] Huston, A., Donnerstein, E., Fairchild, H., Feshbach, N., Katz, P., Murray, J. Rubinstein, E., Wilcox, B., Zuckerman, D. (1992). Big World, Small Screen. University of Nebraska Press.

week after week, and who are involved in the primary plots, tend to be surrounded by people of the same racial group as themselves. Some of the most popular programs among young viewers airing during early prime time feature primary casts that are either all-white (*Sabrina, Popular, The Simpson's, Dawson's Creek, The Drew Carey Show*) or all-black (*Moesha, The Steve Harvey Show, The Jamie Foxx Show*). Clearly, the diversity that exists in young viewers' real worlds is not reflected on their TV screens.

The Cultivation hypothesis, developed by Gerbner and his colleagues to explain the effect of violent content on audiences, provides a conceptual framework for the study of television content. The hypothesis posits that heavy viewers of television cultivate perceptions about the "real world" that are based on the television "world" they see. In other words, heavy viewers are more likely to believe that television content imitates and represents the world at large.[20]

The world presented in the Fall 2000 television season is substantially different than that of real world, consisting primarily of whites, men, and people in professional occupations. People of color in this world appear and disappear, but rarely stay. When they do appear, they often occupy lower income or lower status occupations. The reality proposed by prime time television virtually ignores the contributions of, and in many ways virtually ignores, people of color. For example, of the total prime time population, only 3 % of the characters are Asian Pacific American, only 2% Latino or Hispanic and only .2% Native American.

The crux of the cultivation hypothesis is that television is ubiquitous and the types of messages are relatively similar and frequently repeated, regardless of program type. Similar stories and situations get played out over and over and the repetition of these messages leads to accumulative effects in audiences. Cultivation effects do not occur immediately or with one television program; they are the result of long-term and heavy viewing. Jefferes explains: "Like the steady drip of a faucet, measurable effects at any one moment may be small, but they accumulate over time."[21]

Unfortunately, the Fall 2000 prime time television season has built upon an already poor tradition of minority representation in television. For example, Latinos shown as criminals and unskilled laborers, Asian Americans as small business owners and African Americans cast as comic relief are stereotypes developed years ago and repeated here.

TV has also been shown to be a powerful source of behavioral models. Cognitive social learning theory, developed by psychologist Albert Bandura,[22] proposes that social behavior is determined by a combination of mental and physical abilities and desires. We learn new behaviors through observing others perform them. The consequences we observe others receiving influence our willingness to perform the behavior ourselves. Television characters - and the actors who play them - are often taken as role models by viewers, young and old alike. Numerous studies document the influence of television viewing on the aggressive behavior of children and adolescents.[23] Conversely, there is substantial evidence that television characters are effective models of prosocial behavior.[24] Television characters who are attractive, successful, and of high status are more likely to be imitated than those who are unattractive, unsuccessful, or ridiculed.[25]

Television programmers are not under any contractual obligation to provide viewers with representative pictures of their world. However, as our culture's primary storytellers, TV creators provide stories and images that contribute to the world views of millions of viewers. When certain groups are privileged in

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[20] Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., and Signorielli, N. (1981). A curious journey into the scary world of Paul Hirsch. Communication Research, 8: 39-72.

[21] Jefferes, L. (1997). Mass Media Effects. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc: 87.

[22] Bandura, A. (1986). Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

[23] For a review, see Josephson, W. (1995, February). Television Violence: A Review of the Effects on Children

[24] For a review, see Johnston, J. & Ettema, J. (1986). Using Television to Best Advantage: Research for Prosocial TV. In Bryant, J. & Zillman, D. (eds.) Perspectives on Media Effects. LEA. Pp. 143-164.

[25] Bandura, A. (1994). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant and D. Zillman (eds.), Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research (pp. 61-90). Hillsdale, NJ: Earlbaum.

stories and others are excluded, that can send messages to viewers – especially young ones – that these groups are valued differently by the culture. This can, in turn, affect the ways viewers feel about themselves. Such a powerful medium would do well to provide a variety of images for its' diverse audience to learn from and enjoy.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides valuable information about the state of the cultural landscape in the beginning of the 21st century, but content analyses must be coupled with examinations of both the systems of production and the process of reception to allow for a richer understanding of the role of the entertainment media in the larger cultural life of the people in the U.S

Future research should examine the behind-the-scenes construction of these images. Is the lack of diversity on the small screen reflective of the lack of diversity among program creative staffs? What is the level of diversity of decision-makers at the broadcast networks? What are the policies regarding diversity, if any, that exist at the broadcast networks?

Future research should also continue to pursue the question of audience preferences and meaning construction. Do audiences prefer to see racially homogeneous casts? Is there a differential impact on viewers' world view when programs feature characters of color in racially homogeneous environments vs. racially mixed environments?

APPENDIX A

Fall Colors 2000
Program List

1. Ally McBeal
2. Angel
3. Becker
4. Bette
5. Boston Public
6. Buffy the Vampire Slayer
7. C.S.I.
8. Charmed
9. City of Angels
10. Cursed
11. Daddio
12. DAG
13. Dark Angel
14. Dawson's Creek
15. Deadline
16. Dharma and Greg
17. Diagnosis Murder
18. E.R.
19. Ed
20. Everybody Loves Raymond
21. Family Law
22. Felicity
23. For Your Love
24. Frasier
25. Freakylinks
26. Freedom
27. Friends
28. Futurama
29. Gideon's Crossing
30. Gilmore Girls
31. Girlfriends
32. Grosse Pointe
33. Hype
34. JAG
35. Judging Amy
36. Just Shoot Me
37. King of Queens
38. King of the Hill
39. Law and Order
40. Law and Order: Special Victims' Unit
41. Level 9
42. Madigan Men
43. Malcolm in the Middle
44. Moesha
45. Nash Bridges
46. Nikki
47. Normal, Ohio
48. Once and Again
49. Popular
50. Providence
51. Roswell
52. Sabrina, the Teenaged Witch

53. Seven Days
54. Seventh Heaven
55. Spin City
56. Star Trek: Voyager
57. That 70s Show
58. That's Life
59. The District
60. The Drew Carey Show
61. The Fugitive
62. The Geena Davis Show
63. The Hughleys
64. The Jamie Foxx Show
65. The Michael Richards Show
66. The Norm Show
67. The Parkers
68. The PJ's
69. The Practice
70. The Simpsons
71. The Steve Harvey Show
72. The Street
73. The Trouble with Normal
74. The West Wing
75. The X-Files
76. Third Rock from the Sun
77. Third Watch
78. Titans
79. Titus
80. Touched by an Angel
81. Tucker
82. Two Guys and a Girl
83. Walker, Texas Ranger
84. Welcome to New York
85. Whose Line is it Anyway?
86. Will and Grace
87. WWF Smackdown
88. Yes, Dear

Entertainment Studies IV

Running Head: Wong Kar-Wai

Wong Kar-Wai: An International Auteur in Hong Kong Film-making

by

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Wong Kar-Wai: An International Auteur in Hong Kong Film-making

by

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Abstract

Wong Kar-Wai is the premier "auteur" of Hong Kong cinema. This paper analyzes his film, Chungking Express, using the "auteur as structure" approach. The analysis reveals Wong utilizes a French New Wave style to represent his view of a Hong Kong undergoing social and political transformations. This research is significant because it introduces the work of an internationally-acclaimed director to mass communication scholars and deciphers a film inherently complex to interpret.

WONG KAR-WAI: AN INTERNATIONAL AUTEUR IN HONG KONG FILM-MAKING

The popularity of qualitative research methodologies oriented around cultural studies has contributed to the decline of author-centered research. Whether in mass communication or literature, the author has faded into the academic background. This is also true in film studies where some scholars treat a film as a literary text, even though a film contains sights and sounds. Scholars probably have been encouraged to pursue this route as the cinema has become so commercialized and complex to be authored. While the cases of authorship are few, they do exist and this should encourage scholars to consider the different avenues of research. Wong Kar-Wai, one of the most celebrated art house film-makers in the world today, is a contemporary director who is considered an author because of the amount of control he has over his films, which reflect his distinctive style. His films, in their aesthetic style and popularity with international audiences, depart from the usual fare produced by Hong Kong film-makers. While most Hong Kong films are aimed for a regional, mass audience, namely the Asian mass market, Wong's films are aimed at film buffs. Although, he would likely welcome a larger audience. No one who sees his films are likely to forget the experience because his films depart from the standard Hollywood or Hong Kong fares. He uses stylistic and production techniques inspired by the French New Wave cinema to tell stories that are related to Hong Kong and China. The result of this blending has interested a film world that is seeing more and more multinational films appearing on screens. The global film world has responded by awarding Wong with numerous prizes. This paper explores Wong's style by examining the context of his work and analyzing Chungking Express (1994) in particular, the work which is best known and most readily available in the United States.

Wong has created a body of work that is receiving acclaim in the cinematic world. Chungking Express (1994), was Wong's fourth film, following As Tears Go By (1988), Days of Being Wild (1991), and Ashes of Time (1994). All three films starred actors and actresses popular with Hong Kong audiences, including Leslie Cheung, Maggie Cheung, Jackie Cheung, Brigitte Lin, and Tony Leung. The inclusion of these celebrities aided Wong in getting funding and reaching an

audience large enough to make the films economically viable. Chungking Express starred several well-known actors and actresses, as well as popular music singer, Faye Wong. He followed these films with Fallen Angels (1995), Happy Together (1997) and In the Mood for Love (2000).

Despite the popularity of these movies with film buffs and critics, Wong remains largely unknown in the United States. American director Quentin Tarantino tried to rectify this situation. Tarantino established his own video distribution company and chose Chungking as the first film he would release. On the introduction to the Chungking Express videotape, Tarantino says he cried while watching this movie because he loved it so much. The release of Chungking Express on videotape has made it more accessible to audiences, especially in the United States where foreign language films generally do not receive much attention.

Even though Tarantino's effort has helped to make Chungking Express more available, this film is unlikely to gather the attention and become the focus of fans' obsessions in the United States as it has elsewhere. "Some of the film's principal locations in Hong Kong have become sites of pilgrimage for fans (especially from Japan), and the film's world-wide success has prompted the opening of a Hong Kong shop devoted to memorabilia from Wong Kar-Wai's films" (Lalanne, Martinez, Abbas, & Ngai, 1997, p.120). Chungking Express video compact discs, digital versatile discs, posters, postcards, and other miscellaneous merchandise regularly appear for sale on eBay, an internet auction site. While American fans of Wong are unlikely to encounter this merchandise in their local stores, they are able to fulfill their material desires through international e-commerce.

The film's popularity has little to do with its commercial potential. It is an ambiguous film with an expressive surface. It appeals to audience members who enjoy seeing a film structurally different than most of the films available. Past and present events are seen or discussed back and forth at times, and there are two stories with a few common characters and places. Thus, to see Chungking Express is to experience something amazingly different. Wong's films have quite distinctive characters, and he blends his experimental structure and cinematography with a

noticeable emotional underpinning.

The aim of this paper is to explain how this film is structured by its creator, Wong Kar-Wai. It will discuss the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study, the Hong Kong film industry for context, and Wong Kar-Wai's background. Context, whether it is of the film industry or of cultural metaphors, remains important in the analysis of cinema because no director has ever created a film without seeing one before. In most cases, directors are avid followers of the cinema and are influenced by the films and directors they admire most. A director's work is the product of both his or her own creativity and an adopted language of film. This often results in the appearance of intertextual references. After context is provided, the film is analyzed and conclusions are offered. In brief, this paper argues that Chungking Express displays both the influence of French New Wave and Wong's sometimes subtle, personal interpretation of contemporary Hong Kong. This combination contributes to the fascination which surrounds his work.

Method and Theory: The Film-maker as Auteur and the French New Wave

This paper uses the "auteur as structure" approach to analyzing film. This approach enables researchers to examine films from the perspective of the director. "Early auteur theory pursued what might reasonably be described as a cult of personality in which a film text under close examination might reveal the 'essence' of its director" (Nelmes, 1996, p.150). It cannot be applied to any film, however. This approach is applicable only to films which were made by directors who had enough control to be considered the author of the film. Films which are scripted, cast, and edited by the director are considered to be authored by them. The director might not make every decision or physically make every edit, but their powerful control over the film is indisputable. This situation is in contrast to the golden era of the Hollywood studios when making films was akin to making automobiles on an assembly line. In this era, directors had little control over the script, choice of actors and actresses, and editing. Movies were made in an assembly line process to increase efficiency of production. Even great film-makers might not be an auteur, because "auteurs 'sign' their work, no matter what, whereas non-auteurs may make great films, but will never make a

masterpiece" (Casetti, 1999, p. 80). By deciphering the films of authors like Orson Welles, scholars can explore the author's unique aesthetic philosophy, which is a center of the small universe of his or her creations.

The "auteur as structure" approach demands that researchers consider a director's influences, history, social context, and previous works. The "structure" in this approach are those factors which contribute to the making of a film that is noticeably the creation of its director. This approach is a by-product of the evolution of "mise-en-scene," defined as "how the scene is organised, lit and framed for the camera. [It] is one way of producing meaning in films which can be straightforward and extremely complex, depending upon the intentions and skill of the director" (Nelmes, p.134). This concept is used to locate influences of a director in a film that was controlled largely by the producers.

The French New Wave, or Nouvelle Vague film-makers, are largely responsible for this emphasis on the auteur. They began as a group of critics writing for the French film magazine, Cahiers du Cinema. Frustrated with the French cinema's reliance on old novels, they argued for more contemporary stories and more expressionistic film techniques. They saw film-makers like Alfred Hitchcock, Jean Renoir, John Ford, and Roberto Rossellini as auteurs who used the camera like a pen (Casetti, pp.79-80). According to New Wave critics, the task of critics is to recognize the personal, and not just the rhetorical, elements in film (Casetti, p.81).

Part of identifying the personal attributes of a film is understanding the games film-makers play. For example, Hitchcock made cameo appearances in his own films. Part of the viewers' task in watching a Hitchcock film is to find the director. A similar game was played by the French New Wave critics who became auteurs. Francois Truffaut's Fahrenheit 451 provides a good example for the auteur as structure analysis. Truffaut included Cahiers as one of the publications burned with some books in a scene during his cinematic version of Ray Bradbury's novel, Fahrenheit 451. These references appear in other French New Wave films as well. In addition, Truffaut hired Bernard Herrmann to score this film, as Herrmann did for many Hitchcock films. Truffaut was

thoroughly immersed in Hitchcock--he was working on an interview-book about Hitchcock while making Fahrenheit 451 (Insdorf, 1989, p.44). To analyze Fahrenheit 451, a researcher would need to take these things into consideration.

The transition from criticism to film-making was motivated by the French New Wave's dissatisfaction with French cinema, known as the tradition of quality, which they saw as trickery. They felt that the major studios were telling people their films were good, when in actuality they were using recycled stories and ignoring the expressive characteristics of film. The French New Wave was not composed of film-makers who shared exact visions. In general, what they shared was a similar dissatisfaction with the tradition of quality and an urge to change it. Individually or together, they explored the "relationship between the historical dimension and the personal dimension" of film (Monaco, 1976, p. 9). French New Wave directors made the jump from criticism to directing to demonstrate they could create what they argued for, and to provide a new model of film-making.

French New Wave directors departed from tradition in one form by their choice of shooting locations. They chose to film on location rather than in stifling studios for several reasons. One reason was that location shooting was a more authentic experience--it better portrayed the reality of human experience. Another reason was that it was less expensive to film existing environments than to create new ones. The filming on location was aided by advancements in film stock, cameras, and lighting equipment during the 1950s and 1960s. Lighter cameras using more sensitive film allowed film-makers to shoot on sidewalks or from moving cars. Actors could be more spontaneous because of the portability of cameras. Like so many other directors, Wong admired their work and learned from it.

The first successful New Wave film was Francois Truffaut's The 400 Blows (1959). The characters and events in this film are based on Truffaut, his friends, and their real experiences. The final sequence of the film, showing a boy running away from society, is now considered a classic (Allen, 1985, p. 44). The camera follows the boy as he escapes from a juvenile detention center,

runs along a road, and then finally to a beach. The scene creates a sense of joy, but the viewer cannot forget that the boy's future is unresolved. The moving camera became a common technique employed by the French New Wave.

Wong Kar-Wai was influenced by another New Wave film-maker, Jean-Luc Godard, who was an experimentalist and radical. The use of a plot or narrative by Godard and some of his contemporaries was only an excuse to demonstrate their film-making experimentation (Brown, p.7). Godard had little use for planning. Whereas Truffaut would often write lines the night before filming scenes, Godard's technique appears even more spontaneous.

> Using neither a shooting script nor any well-elaborated working plan, Godard's whole approach to filmmaking remains completely anchored in the instant--the instant the camera is turning--thus avoiding any links with a cause-and-effect past or future previously determined by a narrative (Brown, 1972, p .8).

This technique was used for A Woman Is a Woman (1961). Shot in five weeks without advance written dialogue, Godard arose each morning to plan what was to be done that day (Brown, p. 30). The resulting film was the product of day-to-day spontaneity by the director and actors.

The French New Wave directors shared contempt for their country's film industry and a willingness to experiment in their own individual films. Wong carries on their desire to experiment and his films reflect the influences of the New Wave, especially Godard and Truffaut. While they may not have intended to create a legion of followers, this devotion derives from the New Wave's reintroduction of the personal element into film-making. This influence on Wong will be addressed in the latter part of the next section. In brief, the French New Wave's influence can be seen in the way Wong has experimented and created almost spontaneously.

Descriptive Analysis of Wong Kar-Wai

With the context of both the "auteur as structure" approach and the French New Wave in place, it is now possible to examine Wong Kar-Wai and his film, Chungking Express. This section does so in three subsections. The first subsection examines Wong's background, focusing mainly

on his life and films up to and including Chungking Express. The second subsection looks at the influence of the French New Wave on the making of Chungking Express. The third subsection considers cultural influences on Wong.

The Body of Wong Kar-Wai's Work

A discussion of Wong Kar-Wai's background and earlier films helps to develop an understanding of Chungking Express and the influence of the French New Wave on his work. This subsection includes a synposis of the films preceding Chungking Express. The films following Chungking Express are only briefly mentioned since they had little or no impact on the film being analyzed.

Wong was born in Shanghai in 1958. At the age of five, he moved to Hong Kong with his parents. At that time he spoke Shanghainese, but Cantonese was the local dialect. For some time he said he felt totally alienated and he describes the move as "the biggest nightmare of my life." He did not have a particularly happy childhood.[1] He grew up watching TV, including lots of televised movies. He graduated in graphic design from Hong Kong Polytechnic in 1980, then enrolled in television station TVB's Production Training Courses. He began working as a production assistant on drama serials, then left TVB in 1982 to become a script-writer for feature films. During the next five years, he wrote about ten feature scripts which included a wide variety of genres.[2]

Wong has made seven films from 1988 through 2000. His most recent film, In the Mood for Love, was screened at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival. He is currently working on his eighth film, 2046, which stars Faye Wong and will be filmed partially in South Korea. While producing seven films over a span of thirteen years might seem a brisk pace for American directors, this pace is considered slow by Hong Kong standards. Directors routinely direct one or more films a year in Hong Kong. Chungking Express was the film that Wong worked fastest on.

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[1]Biographical information appearing in his paragraph came from Lalanne et al., pp. 88, 120.

[2]Biographical information from Lalanne et al., pp. 116, 120.

In 1988, Wong directed his first feature, As Tears Go By. The film was nominated in ten categories at the Hong Kong Film Awards, and was invited to the 1989 Cannes Film Festival in the Critic Week section. Set in the 1980s, As Tears Go By examines gang life. Wah is a "Big Brother" to a junior gang member named Fly, a young man eager to make good in Mongkok's gangsterland. However, Fly is reproached for his overzealous behavior and made to sell fishballs as an illegal street vendor. Fly becomes even more frustrated when he is taunted by Tony, the protector of a mahjong joint, from whom Fly borrows money. As Fly's Big Brother, Wah is required to pay the debt when Tony demands his principal and interest. A stand-off between Tony and Wah results, ending in the humiliating beatings of Wah and Fly. Fly now becomes honor-bound to prove himself to his Big Brother, and Wha is even more compelled to stand by and protect his junior gang member. The last scenes demonstrate the ultimate test of loyalty where Big Brother dies for Junior Brother in the course of assassinating an informer.[3]

In 1990, Wong made Days of Being Wild. The film won Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor as well as other awards at the Hong Kong Film Awards, even though it was a box office failure. The film has since been released in Japan, the UK and various other countries. This is Wong's second film and it is set in the Hong Kong of the early 1960s. Yuddy is an abstract everyman, who seeks to find an identity he can respect. He has no job and has been supported all his life by his foster mother. He seduces a girl who sells refreshments from a kiosk in a soccer stadium. He then rejects her by acting indifferent to her feelings while secretly longing for her. He is less enigmatic with a showgirl named Mimi, although he treats her in a similar fashion. Other relationships are woven into the story: Yuddy's pal, who really loves Mimi, and a sympathetic

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[3]Plot information, such as the spelling of characters names, comes from Lalanne et al., p. 120; and Teo, 1997, p. 195. As Tears Go By was the only film the authors were not able to see. The authors cite sources for the other films primarily for spelling and clarifying information.

policeman who is in love with the kiosk girl.[4]

Yuddy's life obsession centers around meeting his real mother, a Filipino woman who has disowned him. This obsession drives him to torment his surrogate mother, a Shanghainese lady with a questionable background. When his foster mother finally tells Yuddy where he can find his biological mother, he drops everything, including his relationship with Mimi, to look for her in the Philippines. However in the Philippines, his biological mother ultimately refuses to receive him.[5]

In Days of Being Wild, Wong uses latin music to create a mood for the characters' emotions. Similar music and colors would appear in Wong's most recent films, Happy Together and In the Mood for Love. The characters appear aloof and distant from the audience, even when the audience can sympathize with them.

Ashes of Time (1994) is set some time during or before the Song dynasty. This martial arts costume film has the earliest setting of any of Wong's films, which tend to have a very urban or underworld environment. It is supposedly an adaptation of or a prequel to Louis Cha's book, The Eagle Shooting Hero. In Wong's film, a swordsman named Ouyang Feng lives in a way-station in the desert. His services as a killer are for sale. Characters stop by, some to hire his services. Others are rival swordsmen who are drinking partners and close friends. All the characters revolve around Ouyang and meet each other fortuitously as a result.[6]

The narrative consists of numerous flashbacks, often indistinguishable from present film time, portraying repetitive actions and discrepancies between words and images. It progresses as each new character comes into focus, including a swordsman who is slowly going blind and a

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[4]Plot information in this paragraph comes from Abbas, 1997, p. 50; Lalanne et al., p. 120; and Teo, pp. 52 and 194.

[5]Plot information comes from Abbas, p. 52; and Teo, p. 194.

[6]Plot information appearing in this paragraph comes from Stokes & Hoover, 1999, p. 193; and Teo, p. 198.

beggar-swordsman, both pursuing vendettas against a gang of horse thieves. These various figures with their individual stories become connected as they meet with Ouyang in the desert and talk about their lives. Ouyang is hired by a gender bending swordswoman to kill a rival swordsman who had failed to keep an appointment with her. But Ouyang is perturbed by his client's gender switching. Ouyang's own problems stem from his inability to tell the woman he loves that he loves her. She marries his brother, who is never seen in the film.[7]

This was Wong's most extensive, complicated and experimental undertaking at this point in his career. Western audiences and critics were not alone in their feeling of confusion while watching Ashes of Time; even Hong Kong audiences and critics had trouble interpreting this film. It was filmed with both impressionistic techniques of hazy subjects, as well as action scenes with an expressionistic bent. These fight scenes sometimes looked as if they were being painted by Kandinsky. Wong was emotionally exhausted while finishing Ashes of Time and he sought to renew his creative spirit by tackling an additional project. While some directors might have tried to remove themselves from the cinema as much as possible, Wong threw himself into it more deeply. Wong's biggest international success to date, Chungking Express (1994), was made during a quick two-month break in the post-production of Ashes of Time (Lalanne et al., p. 120). The film's international success has prompted the opening of a Hong Kong shop devoted to memorability from Wong Kar-Wai's films (Lalanne et al., p. 120).

Chungking Express is a version of the romantic comedy genre (Abbas, p. 54). It is set in the jungle of the big city, and the Chinese title literally translated is Chungking Jungle (Abbas, p. 54). The action revolves around the notorious Chungking Mansions, a kind of down-market-mall-cum-flophouse, with bargain shops, cheap restaurants, pimps and whores (Abbas, p. 54). This setting is located in the heart of Hong Kong's Tshimatsui tourist district. It was this type of environment that Wong grew up in. He raised money for the film's production by promoting it as a gangster film.

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[7]Plot information appearing in this paragraph comes from Stokes & Hoover, p. 188; and Teo, p. 198.

The restaurant in the film, Midnight Express, is an all-night cheap eatery in the city's trendy Lan Kwei Fong district.

The film is made up of two separate, unrelated but somewhat interlocking stories, which both feature cops. The cop in the first story, #223, collides with a mysterious woman wearing a blonde wig while chasing a suspect. She is a drug dealer left high and dry when her hired couriers run off with her goods. He is reeling from a recently ended relationship with a girl named May. Both meet by chance in a bar and end up spending the night together, but do not have sex. Their affair remains unconsummated and unresolved. The story ends casually, with the woman killing the foreigner who has betrayed her in the drug deal and walking off without her wig.[8]

In the second story, another cop has a relationship with an air stewardess. Cop #663 often visits a streetside takeout restaurant where a girl named May works behind the counter at the Midnight Express. The airline stewardess walks out of the cop's life, puts the key to his apartment in an envelope and leaves it for him at the restaurant. The cop doesn't bother to open the envelope. Instead he forms a budding but uncertain relationship with May, the girl who serves him in the restaurant. May sneaks into the cop's apartment by opening his letter and using the key. She does some light redecorating and generally makes her presence felt. She even quits her job to become an air hostess, and realizes her dream to go to California. A year later when she returns to Hong Kong, she goes to the restaurant only to discover that the cop has bought the restaurant.[9]

Storylines originally intended for Chungking Express were developed into Fallen Angels (1995). Fallen Angels is considered to by some to be Wong's most daring and experimental film, being shot entirely through wide-angle lenses. Once again, there are two stories. One story involves a hitman and his female associate, who arranges his assignments. The hitman decides to quit the business, but his associate convinces him to do one more assignment. She is in love with him and

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[8]Plot information, mainly spelling of names, comes from Teo, pp. 196-197.

[9]Plot information, mainly names, appearing in this paragraph comes from Teo, p. 197.

cannot bear for him to leave. He is killed on his last assignment. The other story is about a mute man who breaks into businesses at night and operates them. He eventually finds a regular job. His boss loans him a videocamera, which the mute man uses to tape his father. The father dies and the videotape recording of his father is a happy memory of their relationship.

Both Chungking Express and Fallen Angels displayed quick edits, voice-overs and music played within the scene. The music was more pop oriented, but so were the casts. Chungking Express starred Faye Wong, who is one of the most popular singers in Asia, and Fallen Angels starred Leon Lai, a singer also. The latter film was the culmination of the style evident in Wong's earlier films, especially Ashes of Time and Chungking Express. Fallen Angels was criticized by some for that particular reason--Wong was accused of repeating himself at a young stage in his career.

In the second half of 1996, Happy Together was shot on locations in Argentina. At the 1997 Cannes Festival, the film won the Prix de la Mise en Scene. The movie is about two gay men who go to Argentina on vacation. Their relationship is in trouble and they hope the vacation will help them. It doesn't help, and the movie shows that getting away from home does not mean people can avoid the root of their problems.

Wong's most recent film, In the Mood for Love, was released in 2000. A neighboring man and woman learn their respective spouses are having an affair together. The innocent couple have to come to terms with the situation. In the process they become attracted to each other, but the innocent wife can not bring herself to leave her husband.

When considered together, Wong's films demonstrate his belief in the incompleteness of love while retaining great hopefulness that resolution can one day be achieved. In life, according to Wong, there is aggression and love, love lost and love possibilities, and spontaneity and unpredictability. There is often a communication problem between characters who are trying to establish relationships. They are like drifting souls always looking for their perfect mate. They fear rejection, which leads them to alienating each other. His films are shot very cinematically, in the

sense that the audience realizes they are watching a film. Because Wong's style departs from the popular style, audiences recognize that the scene they are watching has been created. The mark Wong has left on his films has led some of his jealous or admiring peers to make films with joking titles. Movies such as Days of Being Dumb and Angel Being Wild refer to Wong films like Days of Being Wild.

The French New Wave and Wong

Chungking Express reflects certain elements of the New Wave style. Most notably, Chungking Express is similar to many New Wave films in that it has spontaneity, an ending without a concrete conclusion, mobile camera movement, and attention to contemporary society. This subsection explains how Chungking Express was made and interprets the influence of the French New Wave.

Chungking Express was shot while Wong was editing his epic martial arts film, Ashes of Time. Seeking a break from editing his epic, Wong shot Chungking Express in about six weeks. "I wanted to do a project, a simple and direct film" (Herbster, online source). Ashes of Time was his third film, following As Tears Go By and Days of Being Wild. Making Ashes of Time was a draining process for Wong. This period-piece was shot in the desert utilizing some of Hong Kong's best-known actors and choreographed by legendary choreographer, director and actor Samo Hung. It required a level of coordination of talent and resources that he did not face in his earlier films. In contrast, Chungking was akin to making a student film:

> Wong called a hiatus of his own and dashed off Chungking with a breathless (which is to say, Breathless) film student's verve: writing scenes in a Holiday Inn coffeeshop by day and shooting them in sequence, wherever there was enough light, later that night. Total production time from inception to premiere: three months (Stephens, 1996, p. 16).

Like Truffaut and Godard, Wong constantly created new dialogue for his actors, which created a sense of spontaneity.

> I kept developing the story when I was shooting. That's how I worked with Days of Being

> Wild, but this time I really went to the extremes. Chungking Express has a lot of night scenes, so a lot of times we shot in the evening. Then I'd go back to work on the story during the day. The story developed in relation to the actors and the environment. In the end, it doesn't matter if I started with a script or a cast. Long as you have a story, and there are actors, the story will find its own course (City Entertainment, online source).

When there wasn't dialogue, Wong sometimes included voice-overs--discussing both the past and the future. Hong Kong cinema is known for utilizing dubbing because of the high production costs accompanying location recording. This may have been part of the motivation for using voice-overs, a production technique that allows the viewer to see a scene and hear the thoughts of a character, but another reason is that it allows viewers to enter the minds of the characters. According to Wong, "I always think monologue is an interesting device," because it "is always helpful in providing information that we don't get to see on screen" (Lalanne et al., p.96).

Another element of spontaneity is the movement of the actors. This is first visible during chase scenes and later in the many scenes with the "May" character. The first half of the movie regularly shows the cop and the drug smuggler on the move. The film actually opens with Cop #223 chasing someone who is attempting to escape. He passes the smuggler and she turns to watch him run away. During this chase the surroundings are very abstract. It is difficult to see any nearby object or person in detail. In addition, the viewer is unable to see where the cop is going most of the time because space and scale have been intentionally distorted. After the cop and smuggler pass, viewers learn that he will fall in love with her. Through a voice-over #223 says, "57 hours later I will fall in love with this woman." Viewers do not learn the outcome of the chase, however. Like the ending of Truffaut's The 400 Blows, running does not lead to an answer provided by the director.

More chase scenes appear later in the film. The smuggler runs away from men trying to kill her until she escapes on a subway train. Similar to the chase that started the film, viewers do not have a sense of where the smuggler is going. Viewers see the men chasing her, but the distance between them is not clearly visible. The drama is increased because the viewer does not see in detail.

The opening sequence and this second chase were both filmed so viewers would see streaks of colored, blurry lines. To achieve this effect, Wong and cinematographer Christopher Doyle had the actors move at a slow pace. When the scenes are played at a higher speed, the actors are shown at a quicker pace and the surrounding people become less visible. Doyle prefers a more spontaneous approach to film-making, "The more intuitive, the more on-the-spot I am, the better I work" (Rayns, online source).

Doyle used a hand-held camera for the chase scenes so the camera is almost inside the scene itself. This was a technique popular with the New Wave directors, and is visible in films such as Truffaut's The 400 Blows and Jules and Jim and Godard's Breathless. The use of hand-held cameras is not limited to the New Wave and Wong. What unites these particular directors is how they use it to create mood and as a vital component to the essence of the film. Viewers notice the camera technique at first, because it is different than the standard cinematography, but they forget this later because the visuals are unified. The shots lack the jerky movement of the cinematography in films like The Blair Witch Project. In addition, Wong's use of Godardian jump cuts seamlessly blends temporally exclusive scenes together, making the passage of time unnoticeable. Other Godardian touches include the many shots of clocks, which is discussed later.

A sense of spontaneity and movement is also created by Faye Wong's character, "May." May is constantly moving. She washes windows to get the attention of another policeman, Cop #633. She roams through his apartment, cleaning and decorating it, and most noticeably, she sways to the music of "California Dreaming." It is played "so often it becomes a sleepwalker's mantra" (Hampton, 1996, p. 91). In real life, Faye Wong is a popular singer and she moves comfortably for the camera which follows her lithe body dancing at work and at play. She only seems to lose her movement at the end of the film, when she is a airline attendant visiting her old job.

Whether it is a script change or spontaneous filming, Wong embraces change. His underlying philosophy resembles that of the New Wave, embracing chaos. He is able to make such rapid changes because he is both the scriptwriter and director. Holding both positions allows him

greater control over the creative process. As Wong observes the actors take on their roles personally, he begins to see how the story should change. He says, "You say to yourself, a slight change won't matter. So changes take place here and there. Then these changes accumulate into chaos, waiting for you to clear it up" (Lalanne et al., p. 92).

Cultural Influences on Wong

Hong Kong, the base of Wong Kar-Wai's operation, was returned to the Chinese government by the British in 1997. Social and political observers were wondering how this city would respond to such a potentially dramatic event. Hong Kong was a city that was an interesting blend of East and West, Chinese and British, and to a lesser extent, influenced by American and Japanese trends. It was in this environment of cultural mixing and political flux that Wong made Chungking Express. This film is marked by Wong's own personal interpretation of his physical surroundings and his own Shanghainese heritage being transformed by his Hong Kong experience. This subsection examines these influences by identifying significant elements appearing in Chungking Express. These elements are Brigitte Lin's appearance, markings of time passing, and Faye Wong's Chinese duality.

The Westernization of Hong Kong is evident by the physical appearance of Brigitte Lin's character. Lin's character represents the violence, contradictions, and urban beauty of Hong Kong. She is a survivor of the postmodern jungle, although it might have stripped her of all personal emotions. Throughout the movie Lin is dressed in a blond wig, yellow raincoat, and sunglasses. Donning both a raincoat and sunglasses enables her to be prepared for any situation that arises, whether it is good/bad weather or good/bad situations. She looks as if she is always wearing some sort of disguise. Her skin is white and pasty-looking.

A reading of her physical surface suggests the blond wig and yellow raincoat represents the blond female of Western society. A Western brunette is less fascinating to the Asian public because Asian women are not natural blondes. The blond wig becomes a highly recognizable reference to the West. A similar blond wig is worn by a barmaid in a shady establishment run by a light-haired

Western man. To attract his attention she plays with the wig and then she wears it during foreplay. The way she teases him with the wig suggests the attraction of this East/West duality. Sexuality is tied to this relationship. There is a respect for difference in Hong Kong. Here, one can merge the best of Chinese with the best of the West. For the Western man in Chungking Express, sexuality is not tied to Asian or white. Like Hong Kong itself, there is a combination of the two that elicits excitement. The concept of "otherness" is being considered by Wong here. In a society where Western styles, language, and attitudes mix with Chinese equivalents, the traditional notions of otherness are not guaranteed.

The wig is later used to represent an end. After being double-crossed by drug couriers, she returns to the bar and shoots the Westerner. Lin's character then takes off the wig and throws it on the ground. The shooting represents his termination, while the wig suggests a more personal end to their relationship. She is no longer his blond woman and she is reclaiming herself. At this point her character exits the film. After she leaves, the camera shows a close-up view of a can with the date "1 May 1994" stamped on it. This day, month and year refers not only to the expiration date of the food, it also refers to the day the Western man dies.

The Western influence is also evident in the yellow raincoat worn by Lin's character. The yellow color in the coat visually emphasizes the wig and the Westernization of the city. The raincoat can also be interpreted as a reference to the main character in Godard's film, A Woman Is A Woman, who wears a similar coat in the beginning sequence. Lin's character explains the reason for wearing the raincoat and dark sunglasses at the same time in a voice-over. She says that she has become almost paranoid in her preparation for each day. You never know when it will rain or when the sun will shine, so you must be ready for both. Once again we see a duality. This duality might be interpreted as representing the impending take-over of Hong Kong by China. Lin's character must be prepared for the changes ahead--changes that no one can accurately predict. The viewer might ask themselves what will become of her in China's Hong Kong. The rain might be interpreted as changes in Hong Kong brought on by China. Or, it could represent her own personal

crisis in relation to a changing Hong Kong.

An analysis of the Western influence based on the wig and raincoat worn with sunglasses is not a suggestion that Wong Kar-Wai is a "political" film-maker. Rather, that he presents people within a social context and they are inevitably affected by this. The film is not a character sketch of either people or the city; instead Chungking Express tries to understand both through the other. People are understood by their relationship with the environment rather than with other people. This is evident in the way Lin's character interacts with her environment. She stalks the setting, known as the Chungking Forest, like a cat on the hunt. While searching for the couriers or while being chased by killers, she weaves around corners acting like is she is in control. Even while being chased by men trying to shoot her, Lin's character is a dominant personality. This is her Hong Kong, her forest. This form of ownership comes from Wong's own sense of place. This region of Hong Kong is one Wong was familiar with as a child. Wong has a certain childlike love for this violent area, even if its denizens are prostitutes and drug dealers. He portrays it with respect and almost admiration while showing the gritty inhumanity of daily life.

Another significant element is time, the importance of which increases as the film progresses. An early scene shows clouds moving past a dark sky, a forboding sight suggesting at least impending rain. Viewers then see the chase with #223. Just before he almost bumps Lin, a clock changes time and viewers with quick reflexes note it is April 28, 1994. The cop notes how he will fall in love with her, "57 hours later I will fall in love with this woman." As noted earlier, this scene is an example of the French New Wave influence. It is also the first example Wong uses to show his concern with the passage of time.

Changing clocks keep reappearing in the film to remind viewers how fast time is passing. The showing of clocks and calendars goes so fast though that viewers have trouble telling what time it is. This serves to emphasize the point that time is elusive and can not be held at one point. This can be interpreted in light of the time remaining until Hong Kong switches to Chinese control. May 1, 1994 serves a special purpose in the film. It is on this date that #223 will accept that his girlfriend

has broken off their relationship for good, which happens to be his birthday. As stated earlier, it is the day Lin's character kills the Western man, which is a symbolic severing of ties with the past and the West. The date, May 1994, represents all dates that mark one end and the beginning of a new stage, whether it is the death of the bar owner or the more symbolic reference to the Chinese take-over of Hong Kong.

The contrast between old China and the emerging new influence of modern China is represented by Faye Wong's character, "May." May works at the food stand visited by the second cop. After he is dumped by his girlfriend, she leaves a letter to be kept for the cop at the food stand. May takes the key and starts visiting his apartment while he is at work. May cleans and rearranges the cop's apartment and he doesn't realize someone is coming in and altering his environment. This can be interpreted as a reference to a Chinese folktale about a pixie living in a shell who playfully cleans the home of a young fisherman. He discovers her and they marry. In Chungking Express, the cop finds her at his apartment one day. They do not marry, however. He invites her out for a date, but she never arrives. Instead, she decides to become a flight attendant. She, too, leaves him a letter, which is given to the cop by the owner of the food stand.

Time is an element in relation to Faye Wong's May. At one point the first cop says that May will fall in love with the second cop in six hours. In her letter to the second cop she creates an obviously fake boarding pass for him. It expires in one year and has no destination. She returns a year later to discover the second cop has bought the food stand. Since the boarding pass has now expired, she writes him a new one. The viewer learns why she stood him up. In a flashback, she is sitting in the bar waiting for him and watching the rain. The clouds in the beginning of the film finally provided the rain they were threatening to deliver. She begins to wonder if it is warm and sunny in California, so she decides to find out herself. The viewer remembers how earlier in the film May told the cop she was saving money to go to California. During this discussion she is wearing a yellow shirt and yellow-rimmed, round sunglasses, which emphasizes the notion of California as a warm, Western place.

Wong Kar-Wai reveals the duality of China through Faye Wong. There is the cultural China which can be appreciated by many of Hong Kong's inhabitants. There is also the new China. This is a China that will soon control Hong Kong, whose residents wonder what will become of their city. Faye Wong might be considered a representation of a new, more liberal China. She is a pop culture icon with many fans in the other Asian countries such as Japan and Singapore. She is mainland Chinese, although her appearance and popularity suggests to Westeners she is too postmodern for such a comparatively conservative society. In actuality, she is representative of a China that does not fit the typical American perception, but that is quite real.

The way Faye Wong is represented is similar to the interaction of the environment and other characters. Much of her identity is tied to how she behaves in different places. She is at ease at work or at the cop's apartment, at least when he isn't there. While at work, a take-out joint that provides the reason for "express" being in the title, she is constantly dancing to the song, "California Dreaming." Despite the confined space between the counter and kitchen, Faye Wong swings and sways. At the cop's apartment she is also free. She dances, bounces, and looks like she is playing.

Faye Wong's behavior changes when she is on the street. While doing the grocery shopping she is nervous and stiff, unless she is hauling the groceries away and encountering the cop. While visiting the restaurant at the end of the film when she is an airline attendant, she no longer looks free. It seems as if this more public space applies pressure upon her. Only when she is confined does she feel free. It is not a matter of being alone, because she was not alone at the restaurant while working. At the apartment and at the restaurant she has claimed a space. This indicates that a cultural environment interacts with people in different ways and not everyone will react the same way to an environment.

Conclusion

Chungking Express is a middle child for Wong Kar-Wai. It is his most well-known film and the film which is most imitated by other film-makers. It could be seen as a bit of a burden for

Wong, because every film he has made since has been compared in some way to Chungking Express. Even if his style changes, critics will still use Chungking Express as a measure of success.

Looking at film-making from the perspective of the "auteur as structure" demands that scholars to consider the variety of influences, from the films they watched to the actors they cast. All influences are not equal and not everything in contact with the director is an influence. The challenge for film scholars is to distinguish what is an important influence and what has not significantly impacted the film-making process for directors.

In searching for influences, certain ideas become more valid. With repeated viewings, some of these influences become more prominent. One influence was French New Wave film-making. The films of directors like Truffaut and Godard were models for Wong. He appreciated their fast cutting, integration of music into scenes, and pace. In addition, little, subtle quirks appear in Chungking Express. For example, the rain coat that Lin's character wears is a reference to the rain coat worn by the female character in A Woman is a Woman. Wong is also influenced by his own environment. The Chungking Mansions is a place he is well familiar with. Like the French New Wave, Wong filmed on location for authenticity, in addition to the fact that it is usually cheaper to shoot there than a studio. Besides style, cultural and political influences find their way into his films. For example, the Faye Wong character acts out a Chinese fairy tale. More seriously, Wong addresses issues of crime and poverty in a commercially conscious Hong Kong.

What makes Wong the kind of director he is, and what Chungking Express the film that it is, reflects Wong's interpretation of his life experiences. The various influences do not create the person or the product. The "auteur as structure" approach relies on the assumption that people can negotiate the structure that is the film industry and eventually express themselves. Influences are what the directors have identified with in some way. Ultimately, an auteur's film is his or her creative expression and not the mere conglomeration of influences. Influences are represented on film as an ode to one's own survival and upbringing. They are like pictures in a photo album--they remind people of where they have been and who they have met.

This paper has identified a list of significant influences. The French New Wave's influence can be seen in Wong's spontaneity and the sense of movement on screen. This spontaneity is evident in Wong's writing style and the direction he gives his cast, which is one that allows actors to be spontaneous. The movement is visible by the actors' actions and the camera work. The cultural influences identified were Lin's wig, the use of yellow, the modernized fairytale and the duality of Faye Wong. After these influences have become consumed and digested by Wong Kar-Wai, they are presented as his interpretations of cinema and life.

Wong has been creatively successful because he is able to express his influences in a way that challenged film-making. While his films are partial biographies, they also show the influences of current and future film-makers. This is the duality of the auteur, simultaneously looking backward and looking forward to break new ground. Wong's critical success is so phenomenal that one has to ponder what exactly lies behind the cinematic constructions--somber tones, quirky anti-heroes, mourning over losses, slow motion cinematography and jump cut editing. Whether character design or technique, Wong's constructions are inexplicably about Hong Kong. Since movies are vehicles of expression to project a certain collective consciousness, it is inevitable that Hong Kong's Chinese transition was incorporated. Chungking Express might not be a political film, but it is certainly a politically aware film that seeks to find Hong Kong's identity.

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The Influence of Media Ownership on News Coverage:
A case of CNN's Coverage of Movies

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The Influence of Media Ownership on News Coverage: A case of CNN's Coverage of Movies

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine whether media conglomerates use their own media outlets to promote their media products. Specifically, CNN's coverage of movies was content analyzed to see differences based on the ownership. The findings suggest that CNN, a subsidiary of Time Warner, showed favoritism toward their parent company's movies. While CNN increased the amount of coverage of Time Warner's movies after the merger with Time Warner, it reduced the coverage of its competitors' movies.

The Influence of Media Ownership on News Coverage: A case of CNN's Coverage of Movies

In the United States, the press is assumed to be an independent monitor of the environment and since it cannot be an instrument of government, it has evolved as a private enterprise. Like other businesses, media companies have a right to pursue profit as a private organization. In fact, whether operating in local television, newspaper, radio, magazine, or network television, at the heart of this business is the logic of marketplace (McManus, 1994).

Based on this notion, it is natural that media companies have merged and produced multi-media conglomerates to seek more profit. However, it is an ominous trend that the media ownership is concentrated into fewer and fewer hands.

Bagdikian (2000) reports that with each passing year and each new edition of his book, *Media Monopoly*, the number of controlling firms in all these media has shrunk: from fifty corporations in 1984 to twenty six in 1987, followed by twenty three in 1990, and then, as the borders between the different media began to blur, to less than twenty in 1993. In 1996 the number of media corporations with dominant power in society is closer to ten. Since then, four out of the remaining ten firms were merged and changed their owner. Consequently, the country's most widespread news, commentary, and daily entertainment are controlled by six firms that are among the world's largest corporations.[1]

If media outlets under the ownership of a conglomerate cover the conglomerate's

[1] They are AOL Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, News Corp., Bertelsmann, and GE. These six have more annual media revenues than the next twenty firms combined. Other giants firms in other industries, such as Sony, Seagram, and AT & T, clearly were on the prowl for new mass media in order to join the Big Six. In fact, Vivendi Universal was created in December 2000 out of merger agreement between Vivendi, The Seagram Company Ltd., and Canal+. It is expected to earn about $40 billion in 2001.

products more positively and more extensively, this would suggest a strong organizational influence on news media content.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether CNN, the most popular cable TV news channel in the U.S. and a subsidiary of Time Warner, showed a favorable bias in covering Time Warner's movie products. Because of its enormous revenues, popularity, and the key role in media industry, movies were selected as an analysis object among several entertainment media products. According to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and the International Trade Administration (ITA), the movie industry has shown increasing revenues every year. The revenue was $ 56.5 billion in 1996, $ 60.3 billion in 1997, $ 65.1 billion in 1998, $ 69.2 billion in 1999, and it is expected to increase up to $ 80 billion in 2003. Additionally, we are all generally familiar with the process in which movies are released over time in sequence to theaters, then to hotels and airlines, to videocassettes and DVD, to pay-per-view television, to monthly subscription pay TV, and finally to basic cable networks or television broadcasting. This process is also applied to the overseas market. It is widely recognized that this release sequence yields many windows, which cause additional revenues (Waterman, 1985; Owen and Wildman, 1992).

In September 1995, Time Warner Inc. (parent company of Warner Bros.) and Turner Broadcasting System Inc. (parent company of CNN) merged with the resulting company being the largest in the world media sector with revenues of more than $ 20 billion at the end of the year. Today, Time Warner's revenues equal almost $ 27 billion. This merger provides a good reference to determine the influence of parent company on

content. Therefore this study examines the contents of CNN news before and after the merger.

Despite growing competition, CNN is the leading twenty-four-hour news channel, reaching over 190 million households in the U.S. and abroad, as well as providing news feeds to almost 500 American over the air TV stations (Dizard, 2000). It has expanded its business into CNN Headline News, CNNfn (financial network), CNNsi (sports illustrated), CNNi (international), and CNN interactive (Web). However, it is just one of the small subsidiaries of the conglomerate now called AOL Time Warner.

CNN's coverage of the movies produced or distributed by the top four U.S. media conglomerates – Time Warner (Warner Bros., New Line Cinema, Castle Rock), Walt Disney (Walt Disney Pictures, Buena Vista, Miramax, TouchStone), Viacom (Paramount Pictures), and News Corp. (20th Century Fox, Searchlight) -- will be examined to identify amount of coverage vary based on ownership.

The underlying question is whether ownership changes make a difference in media content. Are the news media pressured by their parent companies to support corporate interest?

Literature Review

While it is hard to find a direct study on the ownership's influence on CNN news content, there is considerable related research to be reviewed for this study.

Five decades have passed since White (1950) suggested that journalists act as gatekeepers of messages. In his study on the influence on news content, he explained that journalists select from among the day's events those that will become news. His

conclusion that Mr. Gates was subjective in his news judgement led to a long line of research examining the role of the gatekeeper in the news production process.

Breed (1955), for example, studied how journalists become socialized to their jobs and concluded that the primary news organization objective -- to get the news -- can override individual disagreements over professional concerns with objectivity. Tuchman (1972) meanwhile examined journalists' notions of objectivity as strategic ritual. The major findings of these classic studies were that: reporter routines are deeply embedded in the structure of beat systems and events are identified as news through a process of bureaucratically manageable practices.

Since then, an increasing number of studies have focused on the ways in which media workers and their employers, as well as media organizational structures and society itself, affect media content (Browning, Grierson, and Howard, 1984; Coulson, 1994, Fradgley and Niebauer, 1999; Swisher and Reese, 1992)

However, individual workers and their routines must be subordinated to the larger organization and its goals. All members of an organization must answer to the owners and top management, who coordinate the entire enterprise. The ultimate power of organization-level lies in owners, who set policy and enforce it (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). The influence of ownership on content has been an important concern in the news media. Tracing the organizational connections among media reveals greater reasons for concern over the homogenization of content and ownership as an organizational influence.

According to Bagdikian, an editor at Simon & Schuster, a division of Gulf+Western, proposed publication of a book in 1979 that was critical of large

corporations. Even though the book did not mention Gulf+Western by name, the president of Simon & Schuster rejected the proposed book because it made all corporations look bad (Bagdikian, 2000).

The merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications Inc. in 1989 provides a good example of how the changing structure of media companies affects media content. One of the primary issues raised by the merger was the impact on journalistic integrity and editorial independence of Time Inc.'s magazines. As editor-in-chief of Time Inc., Jason McManus had decided not to cover the March 4 Time Warner merger announcement, a story big enough to be covered by both the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*. McManus later said it might have been a bad decision (Ciabattari, 1989).

Michael Eisner, chairman of Disney, which owns ABC, said in an NPR interview in September 1998: "I would prefer ABC not to cover Disney. I think it's inappropriate." Shortly thereafter, ABC news killed a critical report about Walt Disney World. General Electric, which owns NBC, has taken similar intrusive actions (Manday, 1999).

On Feb. 23, 2000, the guest of "Good Morning America (ABC)," was the comic sock puppet, which looks like a mongrel dog, that has appeared on all the television commercials of Pets.com, an Internet pets-supply company. On Feb. 11, the Pets.com sock puppet appeared on "Nightline (ABC)." The sock puppet was one of many guests, who were luminaries like the Harvard Professor Alvin Poussaint and Jim Davies, the creator of Garfield. The puppet did a long interview on "Live! Regis & Kathie Lee (ABC)." And he was the subject of a question on the immensely popular game show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire (ABC)." The question: What company has a sock puppet on its commercials? The contestant's final answer: Pets.com. He got that right. Of

course, the popularity of the puppet gives ABC many other openings for featuring it in ways that would not affect the news division -- something the network has taken advantage of. However, it should be noted that Go.com, the Internet arm of the Walt Disney Company, ABC's parent company, had bought a stake of 5 % in the pet site only a month ago before this bombard of coverage of the puppet (Kaufman, 2000).

In recent years conglomerates have placed more emphasis on the promotion of their own entertainment products such as television programs or movies.

One of the reasons the final *Seinfeld* was such a publicity bombard may have been that it plugged into the promotional apparatuses of two news-oriented corporations. NBC was able to promote the show with news reports on NBC (via The Today Show, Dateline and NBC Nightly News) and various programs on CNBC and MSNBC. Nearly twenty-seven minutes of news time of the 12 May 1998 *Dateline*, well over half of the total, was devoted to the last *Seinfeld*. Similarly, Time Warner owns Castle Rock Entertainment, the production company that made *Seinfeld*. The corporation aired numerous stories on its subsidiary CNN as well as cover stories in *Time*, *Entertainment Weekly* and *People*, magazines that the corporation also owns (McAllister, 2000).

Time magazine, a subsidiary of Time Warner, used its cover to promote the movies "Eyes Wide Shut" and "Pokemon: The First Movie" which were produced and distributed by Warner Bros., a subsidiary of Time Warner. *Time* covered the movie, "Eyes Wide Shut," with a cover story on November 22, 1999. The story gave the movie an extraordinary positive evaluation by emphasizing the celebrated director, Stanley Kubrick, and the famous movie stars. On July 5, 1999, *Time* also dealt with the movie, "Pokemon: The First Movie" through 12 pages of cover story. It emphasized that the

Pokemon was not harmful. That perspective was quite the opposite of common opinion, in which the Pokemon craze among children was considered a seriously dangerous one. The Pokemon series are now aired on the WB network, a broadcasting division of Time Warner, six days a week.

The AOL-Time Warner deal raised the prospect that *Time, Fortune* and CNN would be increasingly tempted to promote their parent company, Time Warner and AOL's vision of future, but not other companies'.

Stories about fictional or real 'Twisters' appeared on the cover of the Time Warner owned *Time* and *Entertainment Weekly* in May 1996, the same month the Warner Brothers' movie *Twister* was released in cinemas (McAllister, 2000).

Because producers invest a considerable amount of money for a movie, they try to use every possible way to promote their movies. Studios often add 50% to a picture's production budget just for advertising and publicity (Vogel, 1998). While people usually rely on a variety of channels to choose a movie to see, news coverage might give more credibility than commercial advertisement in the choice.

Even though people in Hollywood have often scorned an analytical approach to predicting box office success, a series of research has been done to examine the factors affect the performance of theatrical movies.

Litman (1983) found that both production costs and critical reviews had the most impact on rental income. On the contrary, Eliashberg and Shugan (1997) found that critics merely give advance notice of public opinion rather than influence audiences themselves. Cooper-Martin (1992) also found no significant connection between critics and the choices of moviegoers. Indeed, Cooper-Martin (1992) and Faber and O'Guinn

(1984) found that movie previews were more important in influencing moviegoers' choices than critics' reviews. However, Wyatt and Badger (1990) demonstrated that reviews -- even mixed and negative reviews -- could increase readers' interest in seeing movies.

Critics blanket newspapers, magazines, and television with evaluations of movies, and many viewers say critical opinion is extremely important to making their viewing choices. That some movie critics are seen as highly credible sources by many American moviegoers is unquestionable, and critic Gene Siskel's death was mourned by many television viewers and newspaper readers (Adams and Lubbers, 2000).

Results of previous research are inconsistent and the goal of predicting financial success of movies seems to be elusive. However, media companies are finding themselves in an increasingly costly, competitive, conglomerate-oriented environment, in which economic logic encourages heavy promotion by theses companies, often using themselves to do the promotion (McAllister, 2000). Therefore, the need for publicity about movies on television programs, online, and in newspapers and magazines is increasing in the media industry.

Additional review of the literature on CNN news analysis is needed for this current study. In spite of its rapid growth and the large number of available viewers, 190 million households in the U.S. and abroad, little research has been done exploring CNN. In general, the preponderance of CNN studies has focused on the diversity or balance of news content (Rosen, 1991; Rosenstiel, 1994; Snyder, 1996), the effect of CNN news (Pan et al., 1994), analysis of CNN World Report (Dilawari et al., 1991; Ganzert and Flournoy, 1992; Yu, 1996), gender stereotype in sports coverage (Boutilier &

SanGiovanni, 1983; Bryant, 1980; Duncan and Messner, 1994; Gantz & Wenner, 1991; Tuggle, 1997) and comparison with three broadcast networks (Bae, 2000; Smith, 1992; The Media Institute, 1982).

Based on previous literature, it is difficult to find any direct study about the analysis of ownership influence on entertainment news of CNN.

In fact, only a few studies have been conducted analyzing the entertainment field. One of the pertinent projects for this study was conducted by Lee and Hwang (1997). They compared Time and Newsweek's entertainment stories, before and after the merger between Time Inc. and Warner Communication, to examine the impact of media ownership. Their findings suggested that conglomerate ownership could force a leading newsmagazine to show favoritism toward the entertainment products of its parent corporation.

Hull (2000) examined another dimension of possible interdependence between the components of Time Warner. His study indicated that two of Time Warner's publication, Time and People, did cover recordings and artists distributed by Time Warner's record distribution arm, WEA Corp. more than recordings and artists distributed by WEA Corp's competitors. The results also showed marginal significance when comparing favorability of reviews, due largely to a higher than predicted count of neutral reviews for Time Warner artists/recordings and a higher than predicted count of positive reviews for independently distributed artists. Both studies were limited to the magazine analysis.

Meanwhile most research has been devoted to the analysis of the structure and the behaviors of the entertainment industry rather than the entertainment news. Several scholars examined the business economics of the major entertainment enterprises: movies

and television programming, music, broadcasting, cable, gambling, and sports. They explained the booming of the entertainment industry with basic economic characteristics of media products such as zero marginal cost, price discrimination, and public goods (Burnett, 1992; Compaine and Gomery, 2000; Greco, 2000; Vogel, 1998; Wolf, 1999).

In spite of the possibility, the entertainment news has rarely, if ever, been addressed before in the studies of CNN news analysis and in the impact of ownership studies. Therefore, ownership's influence on CNN entertainment news content will be examined through the following research questions.

Q 1: Did CNN increase the amount of coverage of Time Warner's movies after the merger compared to before the merger?

Q 2: Did CNN reduce the amount of coverage of other companies' movies after the merger compared to before the merger?

Q 3: Did CNN have more coverage of Time Warner's movies than other companies' after the merger?

Method

To analyze CNN's coverage of entertainment news, CNN news dealings with movies or movie studios were examined. CNN's coverage of the movies produced or distributed by the top four U.S. media conglomerates -- Warner Brothers, New Line Cinema, Castle Rock (Time Warner), Walt Disney Pictures, Miramax, Touchstone (Walt Disney), Paramount Pictures (Viacom), and 20th Century Fox, Searchlight (News Corp.) -- was examined to identify the amount of coverage vary based on ownership.

In 1999, Time Warner, Walt Disney, Viacom, and News Corporations earned $ 8 billion, $ 10.3 billion, $ 4.8 billion, and $ 4.4 billion respectively from movies and TV programming. Even though Universal Pictures, Columbia Pictures, and Sony Pictures are also major movie producers and distributors, their parent companies are closer to manufacturing business companies. Seagram, parent company of Universal Pictures, which is now owned by Vivendi, earned $2.9 billion (24 percent) of revenues from movies and TV programming among the entire revenues. Sony, parent company of Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures, got only 8 percent from movies and TV among its entire revenues. Both corporations' revenues from other business outside media accounted for 38 percent and 70 percent respectively. Therefore, this study focused on CNN coverage of the top four media conglomerates' movies.

In the first week of September in 1995, there was an unofficial announcement of a merger between Time Warner (parent company of Warner Bros.) and Turner Broadcasting System (parent company of CNN). Three weeks later the official announcement was reported. Corporate operational control by the new corporation created by the merger, if any, would not become prominent immediately. Therefore, movie related stories on CNN aired from September 1993 to August 1994 (one year before the merger), and from September 1996 to August 1997 (one year after the merger) were selected. And the transcripts of the news were obtained from the Lexis-Nexis data-base (http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe).

The unit of analysis was the news story. The number of news stories was counted. A news story is conceptually defined as "any topic introduced by the anchor coupled with any report or reports by other correspondents on the same topic and any concluding

remarks by the anchor" (Fowler and Showalter, 1974, p. 713). Operationally, a news story is defined as "a piece reported from one location, or which had the same person or group of persons reporting (or being interviewed), or which had one primary topic" (Wicks and Walker, 1993, p. 103).

Only active reporting of a story was included in the analysis. A simple introduction of the movie ranking of the week was not treated as part of a story. Most CNN news on movies composed of interview with movie stars, movie directors, critics, or the personnel involved in a certain movie. Without a doubt, the persons involved in the movie give a positive comment about acting, directing or superb special effects. Even a critic's comments also show the similar trends. A movie story covered on CNN news is likely to be favorable story rather than negative criticism. Similar to a movie story, movie studio news also provides positive perspective about a new project or business plan. Therefore, this study includes not only the news about the movie itself but also the movie studios.

Since this is purely a quantitative count, an intercoder reliability test was not conducted. Chi-square tests were used to measure the statistical significance of the results.

Results

News stories dealing with Time Warner movies increased after the merger. While it was 68 in frequency before the merger, it was 80 after the merger. In percentage, it showed 18% increase. Stories of Walt Disney movies also increased 9 percent from 47 to 51 in frequency. However, it is less than the increase of Warner Brothers in percentage

and much less in frequency. In contrast, News Corp. (20th Century Fox) and Viacom (Paramount Pictures) news showed considerable decrease in frequency after the merger. While 20th Century Fox's news was covered 46 times before the merger, they were dealt with only 29 times after the merger. In percentage, it decreased 37 percent. News stories of Paramount Pictures were 79 before the merger; however, they decreased into 57 after the merger. Even though the difference among four companies was not statistically significant at .05 level, the trends were in the predicted direction (See Table 1; $\chi^2 = 7.410$, df = 3, $p = .060$).

These results were replicated when the data were grouped by ownership structure. While Time Warner ownership category showed increase, non-Time Warner ownership category showed the exact opposite result (See Table 2; $\chi^2 = 3.789$, df = 1, $p = .052$).

According to the MPAA (www.mpaa.org/useconomicreview/1999Economic), the number of theatrical movies released in the U.S. during the analysis period is following as: 1993 (462), 1994 (453), 1996 (471), and 1997 (510). The *Variety*, a weekly entertainment newsmagazine, keeps the record of movie box office revenues every week. From September 1993 to August 1994 (one year before the merger), the top 50 box office movies were examined every week. Time Warner movies were 30, Walt Disney movies were 26, News Corp. movies were 13, and Viacom movies were 13 (See Appendix 1). And from September 1996 to August 1997 (one year after the merger), the top 50 box office movies were also examined every week. Time Warner movies were 25, Walt Disney movies were 24, News Corp. movies were 14, and Viacom movies were 18 (See Appendix 2).

Another interesting finding comes from the above examination. Most movie news aired at CNN corresponded with the movies ranked at the top 50 box office. The results, however, showed significant difference on coverage between Time Warner's movies and other three companies' movies. While Time Warner had 30 movies among top 50 before the merger, the number of TW movies ranked top 50 decreased into 25. Even though the number of top ranked movies was decreased from 30 to 25, news stories of Time Warner movies increased from 68 to 80. Of course Time Warner still had the most top 50 movies and thus deserved to have more coverage than other studios (See Table 3). However, in spite of the poor performance of Time Warner movies, CNN covered more news about Warner Brothers and other subsidiary producing movies for Time Warner. In contrast, although other studios' movies made a progress in performance after the merger period, they didn't get much attention from CNN. For example, the number of top 50 movies of 20th Century Fox movies increased from 13 to 16 (For the details see the Appendix 1 & 2). But the CNN coverage of Fox movies decreased from 46 to 29.

It is considerably comparative with the ratio of before the merger period. There was no significant difference in terms of reporting the top 50 movies. Before the merger, all four studios' movies ranked at the top 50 were covered at CNN movie news with a similar proportion. The top 50 box office movies accounted for around 50 percent of CNN movie news.

With regard to the third research question, CNN had more coverage of Time Warner movies than that of other studios. After the merger, all movie stories including the four major companies' studios were 217. While Time Warner news aired 80 times

(36.9%), Walt Disney, News Corp., and Viacom news stories were found 51 (23.5%), 29 (13.4%), and 57 times (26.3%) respectively.

Before the merger, however, the ratio was different from the result of after the merger. Among 240 news stories, Time Warner had 68 (28.3%), Walt Disney had 47 (19.6%), News Corp. had 46 (19.2%) and Viacom had 79 (32.9%).

It should be noted, however, that Viacom's acquisition of Paramount Pictures was hot issue in 1994. Consequently, the majority of the news stories about Paramount Pictures was merger and acquisition related news at that time. It is interpreted that because of the event, Paramount Pictures got more attention as compared to other companies and was covered more frequently, as much as 79 times.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine whether CNN, the most popular cable TV news channel in the U.S., showed a favorable bias in covering Time Warner's movie products. The coverage of movies by CNN would be the referential frame of how an enormous conglomerate would cover its entertainment products in its own outlets. The overall findings of this study suggest that CNN showed favoritism toward its parent company's movie studio in terms of the quantity in news coverage. Therefore, ownership likely has an influence on media content.

CNN covered Time Warner's movies more extensively than Time Warner's competitors' movies, after the merger with Time Warner. Even though CNN also increased its coverage of Walt Disney's movies after the merger, the percentage is almost

the same as before the merger. In contrast, CNN decreased its coverage on 20th Century Fox' movies (News Corp.) and Paramount's movies (Viacom).

Promotion is one of the three elements in the overall marketing effort for a movie. The other two are advertising and distribution to theaters. Although advertising and distribution have been the traditional mainstays of movie marketing efforts, recent trends have seen a growth in promotion to the point where it has become as important as advertising. In particular, publicity on media does not cost money and has more credibility than commercial advertising.

If a certain movie keeps a good box office record, it has an increased possibility to be covered. News coverage, then guarantees proven quality among lots of choices. A theatrical movie has sequencing marketing strategy. It is generally sensible for profit-maximizing distributors to price-discriminate in different markets or "windows" by selling the same product at different prices to different buyers. It follows the typical windows: Domestic theatrical, foreign theatrical, pay per view, worldwide home video, pay TV, foreign TV, network TV, and syndication. Therefore, news release promotes the selling at the next step of windows. That's why publicity about a film is so important in consecutive movie marketing strategy.

The evidence of using media as a form of publicity is apparent. Every movie advertisement has quotes from renowned newspapers, magazines, broadcasts, and cables, to increase the credibility, such as the *New York Times, LA Times, Time, Entertainment Weekly*, ABC, NBC, CBS, or CNN, to increase the credibility. Even though publicity has not been proven as an important factor to raise motivation to go to movies, it is an increasing phenomenon in promotion of the movie industry. In particular, media

conglomerates, which have their own media outlets, might enjoy the publicity advantages. While minor movie productions have decreased chances to utilize the publicity. Even though Sony, Columbia, and Universal are major studios, they don't have their own media outlets, which decreases their chances to be publicized.

The present study did not consider the factors of the predictability of financial success. Rather, it tries to find media conglomerate's biased coverage of movie promotion. It is not the main point whether or not the publicity has an influence on movie going, but focuses on the amount of publicity, which might be influenced by media ownership. The problems lie in the biased coverage by news outlets to exploit synergies between their various products.

Overall, CNN increased its coverage of Warner Brothers movies after the merger with Time Warner considerably compared to that of other rival movie studios. CNN is more likely to cover its parent company's subsidiary news more strategically to promote extensively. The significant decrease of rival studios' coverage may have been in reaction to competition.

Even though it is hard to conclude that ownership influenced content based on only one cable news channel, this study supported the notion that media ownership influenced content through the content analysis of quantity on entertainment news of CNN. Therefore, future studies about media ownership's influence on content can use the present findings as one of example to test the influences. Future research also could look at the coverage of media conglomerates in other media such as broadcasting, other cable news, newspapers, and magazines.

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Table 1.

Company * Merger Time Cross tabulation

	Merger Time		
Company	Before	After	Total
Time W	68(28.3%)	80(36.9%)	148(32.4%)
W Disney	47(19.6%)	51(23.5%)	98(21.4%)
News Corp	46(19.2%)	29(13.4%)	75(16.4%)
Viacom	79(32.9%)	57(26.3%)	136(29.8%)
Total	240(100%)	217(100%)	457(100%)

χ^2 (3, N = 457) = 7.410, p = .060

Table 2.

Ownership * Merger Time Cross tabulation

	Merger Time		
Ownership	Before	After	After
TW	68(28.3%)	80(36.9%)	80(36.9%)
Non-TW	172(71.7%)	137(63.1%)	137(63.1%)
Total	240(100%)	217(100%)	217(100%)

χ^2 (1, N = 457) = 3.789, p = .052

Table 3.

Number of Movies ranked at the top 50

	Before	After
TW	30	25
Disney	26	24
News Corp.	13	16
Viacom	13	18

Appendix 1. Movies ranked at the top 50 during 1993, September to 1994, August

Warner Brothers (30)
The Fugitive, True Romance, Airborne, Secret Garden, Free Willy, Dennis the Menace, Demolition Man, Mr. Wonderland, M. Butterfly, Fearless, Man without a face, A street car named desire, Ace Ventura, On deadly Ground, Grumphy old man, Pelican brief, Hudsucker proxy, Client, Black beauty, Wyatt Earp, Major league II, Thumbeline, With honor, Being human, Maverick, Woodstock, Natural born killer, Batman forever, Richie Rich, Falling down.

Walt Disney Pictures (26)
The Ref, Angie, Blank Check, Sister Act 2, Iron Will, My father the Hero, Three Musketeers, Tombstone, Angels in the outfield, D2: The Might Ducks, White fang 2, Holy Matrimony, When a man loves woman, Lion King, I love trouble, Renaissance Man, Nightmare before the Christmas, What's love got to do with it, Another Stakeout, Cool running, The Program, Joy luck club, Hocus Pontas, Snow white and seven dwarfs, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin.

20th Century Fox (13)
Mrs. Doubtfire, Sugar Hill, The Chase, Baby's dayout, Bad girls, PCU, Speed. Forrest Gump, Rising Sun, Rookie of the year, Robin Hood, Beverly Hillbillies, Good Son.

Paramount Pictures (13)
Naked Gun 33 1/3, What's eating Gilbert Grape, Blue Chip, Clear and present parger, Lassie, Jimmy Holy, Beverly Hills Cops 3, Conformist, Milk Money, Andre, the firm, Searching for Bobby fisher, Bopha.

Appendix 2. Movies ranked at the top 50 during 1996, September to 1997, August

Warner Brothers (25)
Tin Cup, A time to kill, Twister, Bogus, Eraser, Surviving Picasso, Sweet nothing, Space jam, Sleepers, Michael Collins, Bad Moon, Glimmer Man, My fellow Americans, Mars Attack, Vegas vacation, Rosewood, Selena, Cats don't dance, Anna Karenina, Addicted to love, Father's day, Murder at 1600, Contact, Batman & Robin, Wild America.

Walt Disney Pictures (24)
First Kid, Rich man's wife, Jack, Phenomenon, The Rock, Hunchback of Norte Dame, Eddie, Ransom, Associate, D3: The Mighty Ducks, 101 Dalmatians, Preacher's wife, Evita, Metro, Shadow Conspiracy, Jingle 2 Jingle, that Darn Cat, 6th Man, Romy & Michele's reunion, Hercules, George of the Jungle, Con Air, Gone fishin', Nothing to lose.

20th Century Fox (16)
Independence Day, Courage under fire, Chain reaction, Romeo & Juliet, That things you do, One fine day, Crucible, Jingle all the way, Return of the Jedi, The empire strikes back, Star Wars, Inventing the Abbots, Turbo: Power rangers movie, Volcano, Out of Sea, Speed 2.

Paramount Pictures (18)
First wives club, A very brandy sequel, Mission Impossible, Escape form LA, Ghost and Darkness, Stephen King's thinner, Dear God, Beavis & Butt head Do America, Evening Star, Startrek: First contact, Mother, Relic, Private Parts, The Saint, Breakdown, Night falls on Manhattan, Face off.

That Which Unites and Divides Us:

A Study of Television Audience Meaning-Making

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the social practices surrounding television that were enacted by a group of regular viewers of the television program Picket Fences. The ethnographic data provide a portrait of active audiencehood revealed through the ways respondents asserted control over their viewing experiences and the specific terms of their engagement with this program and its characters. At the same time, respondents generated ideologically diverse interpretations that reflected the racial and social class differences among them.

That Which Unites and Divides Us:

A Study of Television Audience Meaning-Making

In a society marked by socio-cultural, economic, and technological disparities, broadcast television in the United States continues to offer a communal experience to all who would partake. What unites people in "audiencehood" for a particular program? How do they create meaning from that program? And what differences among them surface as significant influences on their interpretive behavior?

This reception study examines meaning-making by a cluster of regular viewers of the television program Picket Fences, which aired on CBS from 1992-1996. The data were collected over a ten-month period in 1995. Participants were initially solicited through classified advertising in Philadelphia area newspapers and Internet bulletin boards. Those who responded were sent a survey that garnered preliminary information about their television viewing habits, their impressions of Picket Fences, and their demographic background. In answer to the final question on that survey, 27 people, or 75%, indicated willingness to be interviewed. Ten of these people were subsequently eliminated due to unavailability or logistical difficulties.

The remaining 17 respondents became the subjects for the ethnographic phase of this study. First, the researcher conducted face-to-face depth interviews with respondents, most commonly in their homes or workplaces, to elicit their personal histories and their interpretations of Picket Fences. Next, the researcher visited participants again for a follow-up session that involved further interviewing to triangulate earlier findings and participant observation during the screening of a Picket Fences episode.

The results of this study paint a portrait of viewers whose terms of engagement with this program reveal similarities of commitment but discrete subjectivities inflected by the racial and social class differences among them.

That Which Unites Us

Television Viewing as an Expression of Social Agency

More than half of the respondents began watching Picket Fences during its first season (1992-1993) on the air, while the rest began watching during its second season. In all instances, they indicated that once they had found the program, they had tried to watch every episode.

For most, the fact that Picket Fences aired at 10 p.m. on Friday nights meant planned viewing behavior so as not to miss the program--a kind of purposeful viewing that was not the norm for them otherwise. Most of the respondents admitted that they usually had the remote control in hand while seated in front of the television set. They also acknowledged using television as background to other daily activities. However, they carefully differentiated between their casual orientation toward "everyday" television and the attentive, concentrated viewing mode they adopted while watching Picket Fences:

- I've found that sometimes we do three things at a time. We'll have the TV on, we're holding a conversation, my wife's looking at a mail-order

catalog, and I'm reading the paper. . . . But not when Picket Fences is on, we'll watch that with rapt attention.

- Picket Fences is one of the only shows that we can watch together because my mother pays attention to it. With other shows she's doodling in a book or she's reading at the same time, and she'll say, "Oh, it says here that . . ." and I get frustrated. But not with Picket Fences.
- When I watch Picket Fences I'm focused, and don't talk. Please don't say a word. . . . We can talk during commercials, but when the show's on, leave me alone. I want to be focused.

In fact, several respondents went a step further, characterizing Picket Fences as a program that requires this level of concentration for full appreciation of its content:

- Picket Fences, the way it's written, is sort of like. . . if you don't really watch it, you can get very confused. It's not that you can't glance away, but you have to pretty well pay attention to it. . . . It isn't the kind of show that you can just watch with some interest for a few lines of dialogue.
- It's a "thinking show," where you have to listen and follow. That's why it doesn't have a big audience. I don't think that when most people watch TV, that they want to be challenged. They just want something simple, something they can just brush off when it's over.

> Not something like Picket Fences that they can discuss with somebody when it's all through. People don't want that.

In these descriptions of their attentive viewing behavior as justified by the demands of the program's challenging content, the respondents in this study discursively elevated Picket Fences to a higher plane than other television programs, characterizing it as an elite text. The purposeful, concentrated viewing mode which they claimed to adopt for Picket Fences can be seen as an expression of social agency by these respondents, a discursive exercise of choice and control that stands in contrast to the more common cultural stereotype of the passive television viewer. Here, then, these respondents presented themselves rhetorically as discriminating viewers whose selection of programming--and hence, their power over the medium--set them apart from others.

Consistent with their active orientation to Picket Fences, the viewers in this study regularly used video cassette recorders for purposeful time shifting, a means of exercising control over their consumption of television. While some cited their desire to fast-forward through commercials, the most common explanation for time shifting was to record a program while they were away from their homes or otherwise unable to watch. This rationale for taping was often cited in conjunction with Picket Fences, as the following comments show:

- I usually watch Picket Fences [when it is broadcast]. But I'd tape it to watch if maybe I was out or something. One way or another, I've never missed an episode.

- We tape occasionally with other programs, but with Picket Fences it's really consistent, we tape every episode. By the way, our usual time to watch Picket Fences is Saturday morning, because it's past our bedtime [on Friday nights when the program is broadcast].
- If we're not going to be home, we'll tape it. And if we miss taping it or we miss the show, we really feel terrible. We missed the season finale one year because the power went out, and we were jonesin'.

  Q: You were jonesin'?

  A: You know, like an addict without a fix. It was terrible. And then the power came on just as the credits were rolling.

  Q: So did you try to catch that episode in reruns?

  A: Oh, yeah, we definitely did. We did catch it.

One of the ancillary benefits of time shifting is the opportunity to watch a television program more than once. This phenomenon, the act of repeated viewing, has been associated in particular with devoted fans of television programs. Henry Jenkins (1992, pp. 72-74), for example, notes that viewers may watch a program again in order to study facial expressions and body movements as indicators of a character's emotional state or to search for continuity errors and other mistakes in the program. Similarly, Richard Schaefer and Robert Avery (1993, p. 261) found that Late Night with David Letterman fans used their VCRs to time shift in order to scrutinize the program at length so as to increase their viewing competency about production details and the program's conventions. Examining a different type of media text, Janice Radway (1984/1991, pp.

62-63) found that her female research respondents would occasionally re-read a favorite romance novel "to lift the spirits . . . for the sameness of the response it evokes" the second time.

In light of their aforementioned commitment to Picket Fences, it is not surprising that 10 of the 17 respondents (58.8%) in this Picket Fences study acknowledged that they did indeed watch reruns of the program, whether on tape or when the program was re-broadcast during non-sweeps months. When asked to explain, they articulated three discrete reasons for repeat viewing. First, a few respondents explained that they enjoyed studying the performances and re-interpreting character reactions while watching a second time. This is consistent with Jenkins' (1992) findings. Second, like Radway's romance readers, some of the Picket Fences respondents enjoyed reliving pleasurable moments in the series by watching reruns. Finally, in contrast to what other scholars have reported, several of the respondents in this Picket Fences study stated that they watched reruns to learn something new, something they had missed during their first viewing of an episode.

- If the episode they're showing when I tune in is a rerun, I'll still watch it. Often I'll pick up something different. You see, there's a lot going on in every episode; there are often two or three subplots. So I might be more attentive to them while watching the rerun.
- Q: You told me you'll occasionally watch an episode twice. Can you think of any episodes like that?

  A: The one where the 16-year-old girl was murdered, and they thought the guy who picked her up in the bar killed her. And it

> wound up, it was the mother who killed her. We were obligated to watch that twice on the same day, because so much happened so quickly you just had to reel it back and watch it very carefully.

This third reason given for watching Picket Fences reruns underscores the complexity of this program in viewers' minds and undergirds their consequent claims that they find new elements in the program upon repeated viewing. Here again the rhetorical trope of difference surfaces in the talk of Picket Fences viewers, a means of elevating this television text to a special place apart from other, more conventional and more predictable programming.

Television Viewing as Communicative Collaboration

Watching Picket Fences was a solitary experience for half of the respondents in this study. Some watched alone because they lived alone; others watched by themselves because other household members did not share their interest in the program. A plaintive thread runs through the comments of these respondents, suggesting their belief that their own experience of the program would be enriched by shared viewing:

- I usually watch alone. Picket Fences is not popular with my friends. I wish I could find someone to talk to about the show.

- I watch with my daughter. I have told my mother and sister to watch, but they watch other stuff. One episode was so good I called all around to see who else was watching.
- I watch by myself. I've talked about it with my best friend and my boyfriend, but neither one cares for the show, unfortunately. I only wish I did have someone to discuss it with, because it's a fantastic show.

The other half of the respondents indicated that they watched Picket Fences with others--principally, with family members--and they reported that the shared experience enhanced their enjoyment of the program. However, the amount of communicative interaction fostered by Picket Fences varied among these respondents. For some, watching with a spouse or child generated brief, if pleasurable, conversation temporally contingent upon the viewing experience itself. Others stated that an interesting episode would sometimes foster conversation in the workplace the following week. For these respondents, conversation about Picket Fences was an occasional, spontaneous occurrence, much like that engendered by a host of other social activities in which people routinely engage.

However, a handful of respondents described a more extended interactional pattern with others in conjunction with Picket Fences that bears some resemblance to the kind of "interpretive communities" studied by such scholars as Camille Bacon-Smith (1992), Henry Jenkins (1992), and Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth (1989). In their work, these researchers have found collectivities of audience

members whose interaction with and around popular culture texts fosters sustained social communication and empowerment.

To be sure, none of the respondents in this Picket Fences study recounted extensive communicative behaviors akin to the counter-ideological textual re-workings of Jenkins' Star Trek fans or Bacon-Smith's science fiction viewers, for whom textual interpretation became a means to challenge the hegemonic meanings of these programs. Yet, among these Picket Fences viewers there were several respondents who had joined or constituted small discursive units in and around the program whose participants enjoyed, in Elizabeth Long's words (1986, p. 604), a kind of "serious playfulness" while discussing the program.

For example, one respondent described an ongoing, spirited interchange that he and a close friend enacted in response to the program's politics:

> A friend of mine, an artist-painter, and I frequently swap our views. I'm a constitutional conservative and he's an old Roosevelt liberal. [Picket Fences character] Judge Bone's legal decisions usually supply the grist for our give-and-take. We invariably relate the story lines to the increasing rigidity and intolerance of Christian Republicans and the over-sensitivity of liberal Democrats. It may sound odd, but we have a hell of a good time.

Similarly, a married couple in this study regularly watched Picket Fences together, and their discussions about the program would sometimes continue long after the episode ended:

Q: I take it from your comments that the discussion of issues in Picket Fences is very important, as you see it.

Woman: Yes, very much so.

Man: We tape it Friday night and we usually watch it Saturday morning. Then we'll spend the whole weekend talking about it. Sometimes if it's particularly good, we'll watch it a second time that day.

Their interest in the program was fostered as well by their membership in a community of avid Picket Fences viewers within their Episcopalian church congregation, whose shared intellectual engagement with the program provided entertaining exchanges most Sundays:

Woman: Just about everyone at our church watches Picket Fences. The entire congregation seems hooked on the program. It has dominated conversation at many coffee hours.

Q: Do they get into arguments about it?

Woman: No, everybody's pretty tolerant about the issues it raises.

Man: To give you an idea of that: one thing the church does, to keep going, is to have activities, like flea markets. And we were getting ready for a big rummage sale. People were bringing in tons of knickknacks, clothing, anything. Well, right after a very famous Picket Fences episode, I went to church, and there in the hall was a big rack with about 100 pairs of shoes. And I said to Gary, the rector's husband, " Look at all these gorgeous shoes!" And he just lost it, laughing.

Woman: So they said, "This is the Father Barrett section [of the rummage sale]."[1]

It is fair to say that the interpretive activity shared among these clusters of Picket Fences viewers afforded a particular kind of pleasure. As these examples suggest, the respondents in this study who constituted a "discursive community" around Picket Fences were primarily drawn to debate the program's political, ethical, and moral conundrums. During those discussions, they sometimes found themselves on opposite sides and other times in agreement. But for these respondents, the pleasure was not necessarily in reaching commonality of viewpoint; instead, their pleasure stemmed from the interpretive give-and-take that they enacted, the intellectual "play" that the program facilitated. Such encounters would seem to be exemplars of James W. Carey's (1989) ritual view of communication as a collaborative process whereby people draw together to re-affirm their social bonds with others.

Television Viewing as a Process of Identification

Within the body of reception research, a number of scholars have explored the concept of identification as a basis for audience involvement with a media text (Heide, 1995; Jenkins, 1990; Long, 1986; Radway, 1984/1991; Schaefer and Avery, 1993; Wilson, 1993). Like other reception studies, this Picket Fences study found that most

[1] The Picket Fences episode to which these viewers were referring was "My Left Shoe." This episode revealed that the resident Roman Catholic priest on the program, Father Barrett, had a shoe fetish and had in fact amassed a large collection of women's footwear.

respondents readily expressed a sense of affinity with particular characters specified in terms of three key standards for identification: social role similarity, trait similarity, and ideological similarity.

A number of female respondents saw themselves as like Jill Brock based on social roles they had in common. This character's multiplicity of roles as doctor and sometime town mayor, parent, and spouse facilitated numerous points of identification for these viewers, but each was likely to draw a connection between herself and just one of Jill's roles. For example, one respondent was a pediatric nurse studying to become a physician's assistant, and she identified with Jill Brock as a professional woman and role model to which she aspired. Another respondent, a mother of two, found Jill admirable for her parenting skills. Yet another respondent identified with Jill Brock as a woman in a complicated, emotionally difficult relationship with her "thickheaded" spouse--a personal scenario that this respondent said she had experienced in her own life

Besides social role affinity, several respondents expressed identification with characters on the basis of perceived trait similarity, revealing two distinct patterns. First of all, viewers saw an array of attributes in the main characters of the program which provided various points for connection among disparate respondents. For example, several male respondents identified with Jimmy Brock, who was the sheriff in Rome and Jill Brock's spouse; yet, the character traits with which they identified were varied, as indicated in the following examples.

- I like to think I'm as down to earth as Jimmy. . . . Normally, he's a very good sheriff, very even-tempered, pretty much a guy who knows what he wants; a very respectable and responsible adult.
- I think I'm like Jimmy, in some ways. . . . I think my goodness comes in fits and starts. Somebody once said about some guy, "He was a big champion of the masses, but he couldn't stand to rub elbows with them." Sometimes I feel like that. I love humanity; it's people I can't stand. With Jimmy, you can go either way.
- Tom Skerritt [the actor] plays Jimmy with a lot of human frailties. He's constantly weighing what one person is telling him versus what he sees as his duty. . . . But there's a cold, aloof side to him, and there's that side to me, too, so I understand that.

Second, some respondents claimed identification with several Picket Fences characters, thereby constructing for themselves a multi-trait persona that borrowed from characters irrespective of gender or racial identity. For example, a black female respondent saw Jill Brock as a social role model for her adept handling of her professional and personal lives, but she also claimed trait similarity with attorney Douglas Wambaugh and deputy Maxine (Max) Stewart:

> Sometimes my personality can be like Wambaugh, as far as being a little bit devilish. . . . But Max, I'm a lot like Max, relationship-wise. I was engaged twice. I thought I would love to be married and have a family, but I'm still living with my parents. I'm lonely like Max sometimes.

Similarly, a white male respondent saw traces of himself in four characters. He described himself as "down to earth" and "even-tempered" like Jimmy Brock, possessing "the kind of off-ball humor" of attorney Wambaugh, and being "sensible" and "fair" like Judge Bone; yet, he saw himself most similar in character traits to Ginny Weedon, a minor recurring character who worked as receptionist in the Rome sheriff's office until her untimely death from falling into a freezer during the program's third season: "She was a total goofball, way out there, a strange person but good-hearted, caring, with a lot of good intentions. . . . I guess the closest character to me is Ginny."

While social role and character trait identification were more common among the respondents in this study, a few also expressed an affinity for some character based on ideological consonance. For example, one respondent had been Episcopalian for a number of years but had recently experienced a crisis of faith precipitated by the deaths of her mother and a dear friend. During her interview, this respondent indicated that she had been "drifting toward agnosticism," and she saw Jimmy Brock as "my representative on television." She described that affinity in this way:

> Jimmy Brock is, as far as I know, the only agnostic on television--the only declared agnostic, anyway. And I find that terribly interesting. He doesn't have cloven hooves and horns. This is a very human character in every sense of the word. [Elsewhere] you're led to believe that someone who doubts God is somehow evil. Jimmy Brock is not evil. . . . The agnostic angle is certainly something I can identify with.

The patterns of viewer identification revealed in this Picket Fences project suggest

multiple subjectivities consistent with a postmodern sensibility on the part of the respondents, reflected both in how they saw themselves and how they saw the characters of Picket Fences.

That Which Divides Us

Notwithstanding the aforementioned similarities among the respondents in this study, there were also noteworthy distinctions among them that revealed salient socio-cultural factors shaping differential life experiences and consequent meaning-making. Especially relevant in this Picket Fences study were social class and race as markers of identity inflecting viewer interpretations.

Differences That Matter: Social Class

Social class emerged as a distinction marking respondents' differing interpretations of Picket Fences. For example, the working-class and middle-class viewers articulated decidedly different responses to the characters of Jill and Jimmy Brock, the program's central characters.

There was general agreement among all the respondents in this study that Jill represented the prototypical "modern woman" who combined career, marriage, and family. The respondents also uniformly noted the emotional strength associated with this character. However, when the discussion turned to this character's spousal and parental

relationships, a class divide appeared. The middle-class viewers were positive in their appraisals of Jill's marital relationship with Jimmy, valuing in particular the openness and equality which these two characters shared:

- They have a very strong relationship. They are husband and wife, and through that, they have a single identity. But they also have freedom to talk to each other. They're pretty open and real with each other, which is not all that easy to achieve or maintain. They have the best of both worlds, I guess.

In contrast, the working-class viewers saw the relationship as decidedly unequal, with Jill having the upper hand, and they were critical of this:

- I think Jimmy's gotten much more milk-toasty than he ever used to be. In the beginning he was pretty forceful, and now he's just really wishy-washy; whatever she says, goes. Boy, he's whipped, you know? You can tell who the boss is in that house.
- Sometimes Jill wants to assert her dominance, because financially she makes more than Jimmy does. There were a couple of times that that was thrown up to him, and he feels kind of insecure about that. I feel sorry for him. 'Cause when I was brought up, I was always taught that the man was the head of the house. And you can tell that bothers Jimmy.

This class-specific tendency was even more apparent when the discussion turned to Jill and Jimmy's parenting behavior. Here, the working-class respondents were strongly critical of the characters for their lax discipline in the home:

- Those kids are out of hand. . . . It looks like they have no discipline in that house because these kids do whatever they damn well please, whenever they damn well please, talk back to Jill and Jimmy when they please. And yet they [Jill and Jimmy] are supposed to be the ones who are running the whole show here.
- The kids should not be allowed to talk back to their parents. I think even though Jill and Jimmy try to crack down, they don't have the authoritarian type of voice to do it. I'd like to see a kid get paddled on TV and straighten up. . . . It's not about abuse; it's about discipline, and kids need to be spanked or disciplined from time to time. My father used to use a five-gallon paint paddle and, as some comedian said, pain makes you remember.

In contrast, most of the middle-class respondents praised Jill and Jimmy as parents, as illustrated by the following comment:

- The Brock family is a rational family that's built on values--not in a religious right/fanatic sense of values, but it is a very value-oriented and ethical kind of consideration that goes into their family's dealings with one another. They show a lot of fairness with each other. A lot of love

seems evident in the relationships, all the way around: husband/wife, parents/kids.

In their critical interpretations of Jill Brock's dominance in her marriage and Jill and Jimmy's lax discipline as parents, the working-class viewers were articulating their class consciousness, judging these behaviors unacceptable in light of the strictures they had experienced in their own working-class families. Thus, they were offering a counter-hegemonic interpretation of middle-class social practices embedded in the program and expressing an ideologically oppositional viewpoint about Picket Fences.

Differences That Matter: Race

During the course of this research, viewers cited many issues taken up by Picket Fences that had stimulated their thinking. However, no issue spawned more spirited and contentious discussion than that of court-ordered school busing, a topic that had arisen in two episodes during the third season of the program. Most respondents in this study expressed a strong reaction to this presentation, and there were clear differences among them that related to their own racial backgrounds.

The respondents of color were uniform in praising the program for tackling this subject, and they spoke in a very personal, impassioned mode when stating their opinions about it. The following comments are representative:

- I got upset about the busing episode. Since I am black it brought back feelings. . . . In 1954 when they had [court-ordered] busing, I wasn't

even born yet. But when I was faced with it on the TV show, it brought out some feelings in me that I'm sure my mother and them experienced when it happened for real. I mean, it really upset me to see them point the guns at the school kids; it really brought home to me prejudice. . . . You can read about this, you can read about that, and you can feel sorry. But until something hits you like this episode did--it brought feelings out in me that I didn't know were there.

- That busing story: they had to bring that in, because it really showed Rome's true colors.

  Q: And what was that? What were the true colors that people showed?

  A: That it's fine when there's just a few blacks and everybody's not threatened. But if you get a conglomeration of blacks, then white people get threatened. And I don't know why, because, hey, we all bleed blood, and it's all red, and it [refers to his skin color] doesn't rub off. And that's why I can't understand racism.

  Q: Some people have told me they thought the busing storyline was outdated, because we have an integrated society.

  A: Well, the people who think that, where are their heads, in the sand? If you don't want to bus people, but if you want to try to make things equal for minorities, then what you have to do is give them the same opportunities in the schools, with the same amount of money that your

other schools have. Then you won't have a problem. But that isn't going to happen, because you have a system that's racist. So long as you have a system that's racist, then nothing's ever going to get done like that.

Among the white respondents in this study, four also credited the series for presenting this issue. However, in their remarks, they adopted a more distanced, analytical mode of communication, for the most part refraining from personal involvement in the subject matter. Instead, some attributed a strong emotional reaction to others, a classic example of the third-person effect (Davison, 1983):

- I think the busing episodes were pretty good. They dealt with that pretty much the way I think it would be. I don't know if they really would have had the National Guard or the cops show up at the school like that. But I think that those episodes dealt pretty well with race, pointing out that it's still mainly a white town, and it's still mainly a WASP center.
- The busing story was well done. I can see where that reaction would set in, in different parts of this country. Even liberal Southern California: some of the suburbs outside of Los Angeles would get hot and bothered if kids from the ghettos of East L.A.--Chicanos or black kids--were bussed out there.

But most of the white respondents who mentioned this issue were disturbed by this storyline and faulted the program's creators for presenting it:

- Q: What were some of the issues that you liked?

  A: Well, one I couldn't stand was when they did all that about the busing issue. I thought it was not necessary for them to do that at all. That was an issue that was really prevalent in the early '70s. It's a little too late for the times, to have people still reacting to it. It was kind of offensive, too, because why even bring up the issue that the school was not integrated? It would have been a better storyline to have the school integrated and just let that be a natural part of it. That would make it realistic. . . . Come on, this is the '90s. I would think that by now, it isn't even an issue anymore.

- Back to politics: I am totally opposed to busing of any kind. If you choose your home and you buy it because it's close to a school, then your child goes to that school. Why should your child have to go to that other school? I think they opened a can of worms, and there's no good answer to it. . . . I would not want to see that take over the show. Don't let it overwhelm the show.

- It's out of date. It would have made sense if they did it in 1979, but I just think it's not topical. You don't hear that much about busing. To me, busing is Boston people lining the streets in the '70s. Not today.

As these comments show, the white respondents who disliked the program's presentation of school busing were as passionate as were the respondents of color who favored it. These white respondents, too, tended to react personally to the storyline, and

in a few cases they spoke somewhat defensively, as though they thought the program was challenging their own viewpoint on the subject. In this context, it is perhaps significant that most of the white respondents declared that they personally opposed busing as a means to achieve school integration.[2] These sensitivities suggest that matters of race remain a highly charged, contentious discursive site, even in the context of a fictional television program.

Conclusion

The data from this Picket Fences reception study depict a cluster of avid viewers whose participation in "audiencehood" was deliberately engineered to afford pleasure and control over their own consumption. For some, the program served as a catalyst for communicative collaboration with others as they enjoyed spirited debate around its presentation of social issues. For all, the program's cast of characters provided multiple points for connection on the basis of perceived affinities of social roles, traits, and ideology.

Yet even as the respondents in this study articulated these similarities, they also revealed discrete identities that fostered interpretive differences, especially with regard to the social class and racial differences among them. In the final analysis, the experience

[2] However, that political stance alone cannot fully explain these findings, for although all of the black respondents in this study valued the program's discussion of this issue, they were not all personally committed to school busing as a political action.

that television provides is both communal and divisive, serving as a site for shared social ritual as well as a reminder of the differences of history and circumstance that divide us.

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